

ALWAYS IN THE NAME OF ZION: A RHETORICAL HISTORY OF AHAD HA-AM AND
CULTURAL ZIONISM

By

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ABSTRACT

Cultural Zionism was an ideological position that both predated and contended with traditional political Zionism. Operating from the assumption that a national sense of identity had to be established before a physical state could flourish, cultural Zionism was less reliant than political Zionism on anti-semitism as a justification for creating a Jewish state. Moreover, cultural Zionism envisioned a continued Diaspora of Jews around the world, with a Jewish state serving as a safe haven for those who were oppressed in other countries and a center from which Jewish culture could emanate into the world. The originator and strongest advocate for cultural Zionism was Ahad Ha-am, an auto-didact Russian Jew who spent his public career arguing for cultural Zionism against the other Zionist ideologies of the day. In this dissertation, I examine Ha-am's public advocacy in three distinct historical periods to construct a rhetorical understanding of his vision of a Jewish state. I conclude that although cultural Zionism complicates the typically simplistic understanding of Zionism and Ha-am's arguments were both compelling a prescient, his reliance on difficult truth-telling and a confrontational style limited the direct influence he could have on the Zionist movement.

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Chapter One: Introduction

As historical artifact, Zionism is construed in primarily historical and political terms.¹ If Zionism is understood as the political expression of Jewish nationalism, such a depiction is understandable. A Jewish national identity arose largely in response to oppression in the late eighteenth century. Absent a social position that would be protected from such oppression, the search for a safe physical location became the primary concern. The culmination of that search in the establishment of the state of Israel then turns historical inquiry to the social and political processes that led to the achievement of that goal.² The primacy of physical safety as the ultimate goal of Zionism was not the only possible outcome, however. Indeed, the debate over the hierarchy of Zionist goals shaped the early history of the movement. While political Zionism, championed by Theodor Herzl, would prevail, the cultural Zionism represented by Ahad Ha-am remains to this day a touchstone for debate over the future of the state of Israel.

While Zionism and the attendant organizations and entities of Zionism would eventually debate where a Jewish state should be located (Africa or Palestine), how such a state should be created (international fiat or land purchases), and what such a state should look like, all of those controversies hinged on the original dispute between political Zionism and cultural Zionism. The two sides were mutually sympathetic to the other's goals,³ but it was the relative priority of those goals that came to define early Zionism.

Ahad Ha-am was a Zionist long before the movement toward a Jewish state gained much momentum in Western Europe. As Zionism emerged and grew into a mature movement, Ha-am developed an alternative to the dominant political Zionist or spiritual Zionism. Briefly, cultural Zionism argued that a Jewish national culture was a precondition of establishing a Jewish state; without the development of culture, the state would be an empty shell. The culture would be the

product of Jewish writers writing in Hebrew and a renewed sense of what it meant to be Jewish. Palestine would serve, rather than as the physical home and bulwark against persecution for all Jews, as a spiritual center that would house and fuel the sense of Jewish national identity for all Jews, whether in Palestine or any place in the diaspora.

Ha-am's Historical Significance

The ultimate failure of cultural Zionism might seem to have doomed Ha-am to a secondary role in the history of Zionism, but a number of factors contribute to his continued relevance. Ha-am has become something of a totem for the modern Israeli left, but his legacy is unclear and replete with inconsistencies.⁴ In one breath, Ha-am and Herzl are linked as “liberal minded” Zionists who “believed that Jews and Arabs should live in full equality and respect.”⁵ In the next, he is grouped with Hannah Arendt and Martin Buber as a “spiritual Zionist”⁶ who exemplifies a competing strand of Zionism, related to but apart from Herzl.⁷ Others see a revival of traditional Jewish study as a fulfillment of Ha-am’s ideology,⁸ and Ha-am’s ideology is taken as the inspiration for a new Israeli credo to replace the “somewhat obsolete” identity provided by mainstream Zionism.⁹

Beyond his use as a modern political reference, Ha-am was a significant figure in his own time for a number of reasons. First, Ha-am’s address of Zionism began before the modern Zionist movement was underway in anything resembling its ultimate form.¹⁰ Ha-am began writing about Zionism long before Theodor Herzl had begun to organize wealthy Jews of western Europe or the worst of the Russian pogroms forced recognition of the plight of Jews in Russia. For a time, Ha-am was seen as the natural successor to lead the Zionist movement after Leon Pinsker.¹¹ The praise of his contemporaries has led some to call Ha-am “the most prominent intellectual on the Zionist map.”¹² Of the Jewish intellectuals of the late nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries, “none was as widely and eagerly read...nor has any continued to enjoy as lasting or permanent an influence.”¹³ Ha-am was the “foremost thinker and stylist of his generation.”¹⁴ By the time Herzl had pushed Zionism to a more prominent political role, Ha-am was already deeply involved in the movement and had attracted a small coterie of co-advocates. Both prior to and in the wake of Herzl’s rise, Ha-am served “as the conscience of tens of thousands among the east European Jews who flocked to the Zionist movement...the most feared and respected critic in the Zionist world.”¹⁵ Ha-am remained a paradox though, “who in important respects is on the margin of events but in other equally important respects, decidedly at their center...above all a major, perennially looming moral and intellectual presence.”¹⁶ Ha-am’s profile was such that an anonymous German pamphlet was published which claimed to prove that he had taken over leadership of the Zionist movement after Herzl’s death nineteen years earlier and that Ha-am was the author of the notorious (and mendacious) *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.¹⁷

Throughout his career, Ha-am attracted devotees who would continue to propagate his influence even after his death in 1927. Ha-am was a major influence on Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of the Reconstructionist Jewish movement in the early 20th century.¹⁸ More importantly, Chaim Weizmann was a student of Ha-am’s and noted Ha-am’s influence on his politics,¹⁹ especially in Weizmann’s negotiations over the Balfour Declaration,²⁰ ultimately writing that Ha-am was to Zionism “what Gandhi has been to many Indians.” The attendance of protégés was in line with Ha-am’s leadership style. Unlike Herzl, who called on the masses of Judaism, Ha-am worked to collect a small group of followers who would adhere to and defend his ideas, even in the face of great self-sacrifice. This leadership style mirrored a classic Ashkenazic approach (like the one in which Ha-am was raised) in which the people would naturally follow the most

educated and scholarly leaders. Indeed, the need for mass appeal as Zionism matured was one of the factors that pushed Ha-am to reject leadership positions and limited his own political influence.²¹ Hertzberg characterizes Ha-am as “an intellectual who felt himself predestined to fail in practical affairs,” so that “it was not strange that he conceived his utopia as a quiescent Jewish society organized to admire the 'men of the spirit.'”²² Indeed, a measure of Ha-am’s significance comes from his enduring belief in the power of the spirit over material realities.²³

At some times, Ha-am had major successes, even if those achievements fell outside of the political arena. Work on behalf of the revival of vernacular Hebrew is Ha-am’s most enduring legacy. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Hebrew survived only as the language of worship among Jewish communities; Yiddish was the vernacular and lingua franca, blending Hebrew and German into a language that would distinguish Jewish (*yidish*) ways of speaking and thinking from non-Jewish (*goyish*) ways.²⁴ Yiddish was also a language born of diaspora, one that could simultaneously separate Jews from non-Jews while also effacing some of the difference. By reclaiming Hebrew as the language of Jewish cultural expression, Ha-am dramatically reshaped the notion of Jewish culture as something that existed independent of another national identity. Consequently, Ha-am has been accorded a significant place in the Israeli educational curriculum.²⁵ In his time, however, Ha-am’s dedication to issues of education and culture were primarily seen in his opposition to political Zionism.

Zionism remains, to this day, an active and controversial locus of ideology. Don Yehiya argues that Zionism is a unique case among nationalist movements insofar as the materialization of Zionism in the state of Israel did not absorb Zionism as an ideology. Because the majority of Jews in the world did not immigrate to Israel, Zionism remains as an important nationalist ideal that connects diaspora Jews to the Jewish state. Moreover, the debate over the character and

future of Israel as a Jewish state continues to implicate Zionism: whether Israel is central to world Jewish identity or equal to major Jewish centers elsewhere in the world, whether eroding political support for Israel threatens Jews everywhere, whether Zionism itself is exclusively a political ideology.²⁶ In light of those debates, Ha-am's relevance as an advocate and scholar remains important: While the creation of the state of Israel and the international recoil from the horrors of the Holocaust mean that the threats to Judaism are very different than those Ha-am faced, the significance of Ha-am's vision of the shape of Zionism is undiminished.²⁷

Purpose of the Current Project

Finding analyses of other Zionists is not difficult. Theodor Herzl remains such a significant figure in Zionist history that subjecting him to study needs no justification.²⁸ Max Nordau, as one of the co-founders of the World Zionist Organization, ranks with Herzl in the history of Zionism. Similarly, Chaim Weizmann's importance is plain, as is that of Jabotinsky, and those present at Israel's creation.²⁹ More contemporary figures such as Abba Hillel Silver and David ben-Gurion have been well-treated both in historical and rhetorical scholarship.³⁰ Ahad Ha-am's significance, however, is both less obvious and more complex. In discussing the early history of Zionism, Sachar notes that ben-Yehudah, Smolenskin, Pines, and Lilienblum had outlined the basic contours of Zionism as early as 1881, discusses the difficulties early settlers had in making economic progress, and then turns to Herzl, eliding the intervening sixteen years of debate and development. Despite his inattention to the historical progression, Sachar does eventually return to Ha-am, calling him "one of the most influential personalities in modern Jewish history...the spiritual conscience of Jewish nationalism."³¹ Following his death in 1927, Ha-am's work was overshadowed by the Holocaust, World War II, and the founding of Israel. Consequently, Ha-am is virtually unknown outside of select Zionist circles in the United States,

Western Europe, and Israel. Even though his essays are required reading in Israeli schools, his political program is viewed with some suspicion³² or dismissed as having little value.³³

Fundamentally, Ha-am remains important because his rhetoric was a significant influence through the foundational period of the Zionist movement and remains somewhat influential today. Despite his obvious historical importance, study of his rhetoric has been neglected.

This project seeks to ameliorate that problem. The lack of attention paid to Ha-am in modern times, and the apparent confusion about his significance when he is mentioned, justify an in-depth study of his advocacy and rhetoric. Herzl's prediction that a political Jewish state would solve the problem of anti-Semitism has been conclusively disproven, while Ahad Ha-am seems prescient by comparison with regards to his predictions about the persistence of the diaspora and the threat of assimilation.³⁴ In that light, "since the first years of Israel's independence, Herzl's political Zionism has become much less relevant to the situation of contemporary Jewry,"³⁵ while, Ha-am's specific concern with the morality and practicality of the Jewish treatment of Palestinian Arabs is relevant to the conflict which his contemporaries minimized and which continues to this day. Thus, even as Israel's creation rendered Ha-am's cultural Zionism a utopian and inaccessible option, it remains a useful and remarkably thorough position from which to critique Zionist thought and action. The idea of a Jewish identity which incorporates a Jewish state but is not dependent on or encompassed by that state is a unique approach to Jewish nationalism.

Even as the creation of a Jewish state rendered cultural Zionism moot, the simultaneous existence of Israel and the persistence of the diaspora have created a new set of difficulties for Jewish identity. For a time, Zionism was split over the hierarchy between diaspora life and life in a Jewish state. The superiority of life in a Jewish state was championed by political Zionists, who

saw antisemitism as a force too potent and pervasive to permit Jewish existence in non-Jewish lands. So-called diaspora nationalists like Nathan Birnbaum and Simon Dubnow argued instead that Jewish identity divorced from territorial nationalism was a higher form of development. Ha-am's work explicitly recognized the impracticality of moving all world Jewry to Israel while prioritizing a Jewish existence there.³⁶

The modern coexistence of Israel and the diaspora presents another difficulty: for many, to be Jewish is to be a Zionist, and to be a Zionist is to be an unqualified supporter of the state of Israel. A century of Zionist thought has made "Jewish" and "Zionist" synonymous.³⁷ Criticism of Israel by non-governmental organizations is attacked as anti-Semitic by American Jewish advocates,³⁸ and critics within Israel are not only condemned but accused of treason and threatened with government investigation.³⁹ Thus, Jews both in Israel and in the diaspora find themselves impossibly bound insofar as criticizing Israel will bring charges of self-hatred while failing to criticize Israel betrays values developed from their Jewish beliefs.⁴⁰ Indeed, adhering to the basic beliefs of Zionism is seen as either a precondition or implication of Jewish identity.⁴¹ A Jewish national identity that includes but is not limited by a Jewish state would alleviate those difficulties.⁴² Understanding Ha-am's advocacy, and the means by which he propagated his ideology, therefore reshapes the rhetorical space surrounding modern Jewry.

In addition to the historical realities, part of the problem is the contemporary conflation of "Zionism" with "political Zionism"; Zionism is chiefly understood as a political position alone.⁴³ Such a conflation is obvious in Arthur Hertzberg's definition of Zionism as "a political movement for a Jewish national state in Palestine begun by Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl."⁴⁴ Laqueur notes, with restraint, that such a simple definition, in addition to being fundamentally inaccurate, cannot do justice to the movement.⁴⁵ In its time, though, cultural Zionism was

considered one of three co-equal strands of Zionist thought⁴⁶ and a serious rival to political Zionism.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, even when cultural Zionism is addressed, Ha-am is given short shrift. Specifically, Ha-am's "style and rhetoric are commonly celebrated, [but] they are seldom examined or analyzed in any detail."⁴⁸

What scholarship does exist is largely historical with little focus on rhetorical analysis, despite the importance Ha-am himself placed on rhetoric to justify and guide effective action.⁴⁹ There are two significant English-language biographies of Ha-am and one collection of analytical essays. Overwhelmingly, the essays address Ha-am's political activities and not his writing.⁵⁰ When the essays do take up writing, their concern is merely structural comparison to other forms, not thoroughgoing rhetorical evaluation.⁵¹ The first biography was published in 1960 by Leon Simon, a student and collaborator of Ha-am's, and despite being written by someone so close to Ha-am, it presents a fairly nuanced picture of his achievements. The second biography was published in 1993 by Steven Zipperstein and is considerably more critical. By the end of his study, Zipperstein states that he found Ha-am to be "more provincial and less philosophically compelling" than he had originally expected.⁵² Such a judgment seems rooted in Zipperstein's justification for the study, however.

Zipperstein took up the study of Ha-am in order to read him into the contemporary situation in Israel. At the same time, he criticizes previous scholars for attempting to read Ha-am into Israel's situation in the first decade and a half after the state was created and says they "rendered him an anachronistic, even slightly absurd figure...with the emergence and consolidation of the state of Israel."⁵³ Given the failure of biographers who knew Ha-am better and were writing in a time much closer to Ha-am's to make sense of his work post-1948, Zipperstein's project seems doomed to fail.

At the same time, Zipperstein notes the difficulty in making Ha-am into anything but an elusive figure. The image rendered was ultimately incoherent and full of contradictions. Given Ha-am's reluctance to take on leadership roles and his function as professional critic of Zionism, it is not surprising that he should be difficult to imagine; in many ways, what we know of Ha-am is how he responded to an ideology that was not of his own making. He seems to exist in a sort of negative space, a space in which he was not in control of his own image but instead crafted it in response to the actions of others. Nonetheless, Ha-am was able to articulate a new vision of what it meant to be Jewish and apply that vision to the questions raised or ignored by political Zionism. To that end, Ha-am's rhetoric was then and remains his most significant influence. Ultimately, only by understanding Ha-am through his rhetoric and in his time, can his modern significance be understood.

Judeo-Historical Context

In 1807, the French rabbinate gathered in Paris to assure Napoleon that, in exchange for their emancipation within the French state, they would subjugate their Jewish identity and authority to that of the French national government. The rabbinate's declaration included the formal abandonment of the drive toward a Jewish nation constituted in Palestine.⁵⁴ Following the French and Italian examples, the German government moved to begin the process of Jewish emancipation as well. Setbacks on the march to legal equality were seen as nothing more than temporary. Across western Europe, Jews celebrated their new status and gladly pledged their fidelity and fealty to their newborn national identities.⁵⁵ At the same time that the Enlightenment opened the doors to Jews *qua* citizens, it did not solve the problems of being Jewish in a non-Jewish society. In fact,

the problems of Jewish identity had not been solved by liberalism and tolerance, but, in a way, had been exacerbated. Being Jewish no longer meant a single, sometimes heroic, decision to stand by one's conviction and not succumb through conversion to majority pressure. Rather it now became a series of innumerable daily decisions, bringing out the difference and distinction within equality in hundreds of individual decisions.⁵⁶

Laqueur also assigns the bulk of Zionist motivation to fears of assimilation.⁵⁷ In short, being Jewish was a barrier to full exercise of the franchise, while abandoning one's Jewish identity was not a socially sanctioned choice.

The condition of Jews in eastern Europe, three-quarters of the world's Jewish population, was considerably more dire. The question of the possibility of assimilation was never seriously addressed, so neither, of course, was the subsequent question of the desirability of assimilation.⁵⁸ Most of those Jews fell under Russian rule after the partition of Poland and were subject to not only the territorial ghettoization of the Russian Pale of Settlement but also legal oppression that limited their ability to maintain a livelihood or seek representation in government.⁵⁹ The use of Hebrew and Yiddish were restricted along with traditional forms of dress and other cultural customs while Jews were also conscripted into the military.⁶⁰ Through the insularity developed under such conditions, Jews in the east maintained and hardened their collective identity independent of any allegiance to any national sense. Eastern European politics made the idea of assimilation not only impossible, but also undesirable, and the multi-ethnic nature of eastern nations made the abandonment of ethnic identity unthinkable.⁶¹ From 1881 through 1914, more than two million eastern European Jews immigrated to the United States to escape persecution,

reinforcing both the need for a solution and the insufficiency of Palestine as the solution of the moment as only sixty-five thousand of those immigrated to Palestine in the same period.⁶²

The pogroms began in earnest in April 1881, first afflicting the Jewish community of Elizavetgrad. By the end of the year, two hundred and fifteen Jewish communities had been attacked. As the pogroms continued into 1882, it was clear that the focus was on economic destruction rather than actually killing people. Regardless, the pogroms proceeded with the sanction of the local authorities if not the national government.⁶³ The Russian response to the pogroms was to further restrict Jewish rights through the so-called May Laws that reinforced the second-class status of Jews in the Russian empire.⁶⁴

As a result of their political situations, both eastern and western Jews came to the same question but for very different reasons. In the east, Jewish identity was a marker that resulted in an affirmative exclusion from society. The despair of eastern Europe made the west “glitter” for the Jews who did not have political and social rights, even inspiring a growing minority to welcome Russia’s attempts at driving Jewishness out by force. In the west, Jewish identity was a burden that would keep one from advancing otherwise unencumbered into full social equality.⁶⁵ To that end, both eastern and western Jews were moved to ask what value Jewish identity still offered. In other words, why be Jewish? From a religiously devout childhood through an educationally rebellious adulthood, Ahad Ha-am formulated a unique answer to that question that would bridge the divide between east and west.

Ha-am’s Unique Contributions

To the Jews of the west, Ahad Ha-am’s Zionist ideology was a challenge to and reversal of the question itself. Rather than taking as a given the value of full participation in western culture, Ha-am propounded the idea that Jewish culture was intrinsically valuable. Establishing a

Jewish homeland thus became a means to an end because such a homeland would enable the flourishing of a heretofore neglected culture. The persecuted Jews of the east did not have the ability to form a Jewish center, and the assimilated Jews of the west had no cause to do so, leaving a spiritual revival in a new land the best answer.⁶⁶ Being Jewish would no longer be seen as an impediment to some other nationalist identity but would instead be an affirmation of a unique identity. Cultural Zionism was a rejection of western Jews' desire for assimilation and integration.⁶⁷ The "politics of emancipation" had led the religious reform efforts of western Jews into "intellectually compromising and morally humiliating positions."⁶⁸ Where political Zionism was focused on the survival of the Jews, cultural Zionism considered survival "desirable and even practicable only if the Jews lived in the prophetic tradition and did not surrender their own unique identity."⁶⁹

Moreover, cultural Zionism addressed itself to a different audience than did Herzl's political Zionism. While Herzl effaced the Jewish aspects of his Jewish state in an attempt to curry support among westerners, Ha-am highlighted the Jewish elements in order to delineate a distinctly Jewish nationalism.⁷⁰ In the end "Zionists yearned for the national normalcy enjoyed by other peoples, the boundaries of whose culture (not to speak of political boundaries) are well defined and beyond contest...It is this desire for normalcy that fired the imagination and hopes of cultural Zionists."⁷¹

To the Jews of the east, Ahad Ha-am provided an alternative to both religious orthodoxy and areligious socialism, the two major ideological alternatives. Ha-am attempted early on to bridge the divide between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews. The former hailed from central and eastern Europe and dominated the Zionist movement from its inception, while the latter were victimized by the Orientalist attitudes toward Africans and Asians which the Ashkenazi absorbed

from their European surroundings.⁷² To this day, some Sephardic Jews have difficulty integrating themselves into Israeli culture which they ascribe to the Eurocentric narrative of Zionism.⁷³ Ha-am's cultural Zionism provided common ground for both groups and a basis for mutual respect. In his writings about visits to Palestine, Ha-am intentionally addressed the misgivings European Jews had about their Sephardi brethren and expressed respect for the alternative educational traditions of the Sephardi.

Ha-am also sought understanding between religious and secular Jews, explicitly "refus[ing] to wholly reject the religious standpoint or to take part in any attempt to secularize those who still are not secular, for their own good. He respects religious culture just as he respects the right of people to live their lives according to their values," exemplifying the pluralistic model of Jewish culture.⁷⁴ Part of Ha-am's cultural program was the idea that one could maintain Jewish identity without religious observance. At the same time, the Torah had "been sanctified for generations by the Jewish people and, as such, reflected the spirit of that people."⁷⁵ To that end, Ha-am's culturalist state would be a home to all types of religious and non-religious Jews, provided they could bring themselves to identify with a broader notion of Jewish nationhood.

Education was a key element in achieving a Jewish nationalism, in part because it provided a way to share culture between Jews in Palestine and Jews living elsewhere in the world. Ha-am praised early Zionist settlers for their devotion to education and the role their model of Jewish education played in healing the fissures between the envisioned spiritual center of Judaism and Jews in the diaspora.⁷⁶

Ha-am also recognized the difficulties in establishing a new state where there were already residents who would be opposed to the new political entity. Well before Herzl's rise, Ha-

am recognized that Palestine was already occupied and well-tended by people who would recognize what the settlement of Jews meant and would oppose the Zionist plan. Ha-am was among the first Zionists to see the Arab population as a barrier to Jewish settlements, where most Zionists saw the Arabs as merely an obstacle to be overcome or dominated into submission.⁷⁷ Rather than argue for their subjection, Ha-am condemned the mistreatment of Arab laborers and worried about how much worse that mistreatment would be as Jews gained more influence in a land with a relatively weak governmental authority.⁷⁸ Within the Zionist movement, general concern with the existing Arab population was largely absent until 1907.⁷⁹ Herzl ignored the Arabs in *der Judenstaat* and his private writings and he depicted them in *Altneuland* as eager to join a Jewish state because of the expected material benefits.⁸⁰ Ha-am's concern not only with the presence, but also the treatment of the Arabs as early as 1891 shows his prescience in recognizing the danger of imminent conflict between two peoples. Obviously, the status of non-Jewish Arabs in Israel remains a difficult problem to overcome in a democratic society and a society that is presumably guided by a religious ethic of care.⁸¹

Nonetheless, Ha-am's recognition of the need for solutions to otherwise unacknowledged problems was not what most distinguished him from his contemporaries. Ha-am adopted a fundamentally different approach to the Jewish problem than his contemporaries. While the Chovevi Zion and Herzl were focused on the physical and political persecution of Jews, Ha-am was concerned with more existential problems. Vital argues that Ha-am relied on "the distinction between the afflictions of the Jews and the afflictions of Judaism, between private and collective pains, sorrows and ills, between what Pinsker and the great majority of the other Chovevi Zion were concerned with and what concerned him... The national revival had to be founded, explicitly, on greater purposes; it had a positive content as well and its positive content had to be

made plain.”⁸² In short, Ahad Ha-am argued not just to save Jews but to save Judaism itself through Jewish culture, to recognize and valorize what it meant to be Jewish beyond the context of being a resident of a nation that was not one’s own. Whether religious or not, Ha-am maintained that Judaism brought something of value to the world, and it would behoove the Jewish state and the world in which that state existed to identify and expand on that value; the value of Judaism preceded the value of individual Jews.

Biography

Early Life

Asher Ginsberg, who later adopted the pen name Ahad Ha-am, was born in 1856 in Skivre, Ukraine, to a Hasidic family. The town near Kiev held no special attachment for Ginsberg, as he later described it as “one of the most benighted spots in the Hasidic sector of Russia.”⁸³ As a Hasidic Jew, Ginsberg was educated exclusively in the Jewish tradition, not learning a letter of either Russian or German until he began to teach himself at the age of 20.⁸⁴ Such auto-didacticism was no surprise, however. Ginsberg had begun his formal education at age 3 in the local *heder* by successfully insisting on being taught no more than three lines of Torah per day, over the objections of the teacher.⁸⁵ At eleven, Ginsberg found a book which explained algebra and geometry in Hebrew and was so engrossed in the text that he forgot about his recently acquired smoking habit. His abstinence lasted until his parents forbade him from studying algebra any further, believing it to be witchcraft.⁸⁶ At fifteen, Ginsburg left formal education and studied all of his subjects on his own.

In the meantime, the Ginsburg family had rented and taken over the management of a pleasant estate. The successful administration of the estate improved the family’s financial situation considerably, and Asher took to studying and discussing his studies with a pair of his

father's employees. The affluence of the Ginsburg house made it a popular stop for neighbors and government officials, including some who would later push anti-Semitic legislation through the Russian government. Despite the bourgeois airs, the home was maintained strictly in accordance with Jewish law; no guests could interfere with religious observance and no serious thought was given to Asher's studying subjects beyond Judaism.

The move to the estate also marked Asher's separation from Hasidism. Upon a visit to a rabbi whom his father regarded very highly, Asher was shocked to see the assembly of men oscillate between intense religious fervor and areligious obscenity. That men could simultaneously adopt those positions without facing the opprobrium of the present religious authority sealed Asher's skepticism regarding his father's religious practices. Rejecting the Hasidic emphasis on messianism and the immediate relationship between humans and God, Asher rededicated himself to study and traditional Jewish practice. His studies extended well beyond the realm Hasids thought appropriate.

Asher's father was more tolerant than his acquaintances and allowed some non-Hasidic works in his son's library. By indulging his habit for reading, Asher became a *maskil*, or an enlightened Jew versed in modern society. His thirst for knowledge was not slaked by his marriage shortly before his seventeenth birthday, although he considered his wife relatively unable to keep pace with his studies. Ginsburg's biographer notes that he did nothing to remediate his wife's incuriosity and ascribes his choice to a psychological flaw; "[h]e was too apt to acquiesce in an unsatisfactory situation, which a man with greater self-confidence and a more optimistic temperament would have made up his mind to change for the better."⁸⁷

That lack of self-confidence would later undermine Ginsburg's attempt at a university education. After finding himself unable to focus on the sort of minutiae over which schoolboys

would be tested for admission to a Russian university, Ginsburg chose to attempt studies at a foreign institution. Despite his age (23) and his status as a married man, Ginsburg was unable to manage his parents' disapproval of his educational choices. Rather than lie to them for an extended period of time, Ginsburg returned to Russia after only three weeks of study in Vienna. The failure in Vienna seemed to harden his resolve to escape the provinciality of his village, and Ginsburg moved his wife and children to Odessa in 1884.

Odessa--Introduction to Zionism—Chovevi Zion

The first move to Odessa lasted mere months, but it was Ginsburg's introduction to the broader field of possibilities that awaited him in a larger city. In Odessa, he became acquainted with *maskilim* and their advances in Jewish, especially Hebrew, literature, as well as some of the earliest Zionists and their attempts to settle Jews in Palestine. Specifically, Odessa was home to the Central Committee of the Lovers of Zion under the presidency of Leo Pinsker. Presaging Ginsburg's later program, Pinsker was suspicious of too-hasty moves to settle in Palestine. Like Ginsburg, Pinsker was unable to convince his conference that the cautious approach was superior.⁸⁸

Pinsker's organization was called by its Hebrew name, Chovevi Zion (Lovers of Zion). Chovevi Zion was not successful in achieving most of its goals, but it did provide a place for Jews interested in a homeland to gather and to spread the word about Zionism. Chovevi Zion also provided the substructure necessary to the success of Zionist movements later in the century.⁸⁹ In its time though, Chovevi Zion consisted of men, like Ginsburg, who were intellectually and culturally assimilated into the surrounding society but did not have political rights, and were thus socially excluded.

Ginsburg was forced to move back to his family's home after only a few months for reasons that are not entirely clear. Upon returning to Odessa in 1886, Ginsburg was able to join the Chovevi Zion Executive Committee. His position afforded him a view of what he saw as the organization's too-narrow political goals and weak focus on philanthropy as a means to propagate Zionist feeling.⁹⁰ By virtue of his position, Ginsburg also became the center of a new intellectual circle of younger men with relatively little influence in the Odessa Jewish community.⁹¹ This group was the first to review his first published article *Lo Zeh Haderekh* (This Is Not The Way, 1889). This group would also become Ginsburg's first attempt at taking the lead in Zionist action.

At the same time that Ginsburg was publishing his first critique of the Chovevi Zion, he formed a secret society within Chovevi Zion called Bnei Moshe (Sons of Moses). Bnei Moshe was a "semi conspiratorial corps d'elite" dedicated to reforming Chovevi Zion from the inside.⁹² Cultural Zionism would never be better organized than it was under Bnei Moshe.⁹³ At the urging of a settler traveling from Jaffa to Odessa, Ginsburg's small circle was encouraged to form a subgroup to change the Chovevi Zion. In Ginsburg's absence, they agreed that he should be the leader. Ginsburg was invited to a meeting without being told what the subject of the meeting would be. He found himself in agreement with the ideas and was pressured to accept leadership of the movement.⁹⁴ Ginsburg was not the natural choice for leadership because of the presence of Moshe Lilienblum who was a much more prominent supporter of Chovevi Zion. The younger members of Bnei Moshe were put off by Lilienblum's patronizing attitude though, and found themselves attracted to Ginsburg's image as "charismatic and cast in the mold of the Hasidic rebbes...even in the way he carried himself—distant, disapproving, cerebral, reclusive" which they saw as evidence of his fitness for leadership.⁹⁵

Months after Bnei Moshe was founded, the Chovevi Zion garnered official recognition for their organization from the Russian government. Newly legitimized, the Chovevi Zion set about to elect a committee and Ginsburg was pushed to seek election. Bnei Moshe stayed active until its dissolution in 1897 but was largely ineffective in the political arena.⁹⁶ The group focused on disseminating newsletters, establishing Hebrew-language schools and libraries in Palestine and Russia, and founding a Hebrew-language publishing imprint.⁹⁷ Concurrent with the formation of Bnei Moshe, Ginsburg began publishing essays that criticized the trajectory of Zionist action. These essays marked his first adoption of the pen name Ahad Ha-am, which was to become more well-known than his given name and very important in the Zionist world.⁹⁸

The pen name itself was a fully symbolic choice. In choosing his nom de plume, Ginsberg intended to indicate that he was not a writer and would not become a writer. Ginsberg continued use of his given name as the editor of a Hebrew language journal he would later found, reserving use of his pen name for his writing on Zionism and politics. Ironically, his use of Ahad Ha-am lasted the rest of his days and has essentially subsumed his given name.

The first of Ha-am's essays to appear in print was titled *Lo Zeh Haderekh* (This is Not the Way, 1889). *Lo Zeh Haderekh* outlined "the whole philosophy of Zionism which its author was to develop in years to come."⁹⁹ Rooted in the observable failings of the Chovevi Zion movement, Ha-am argues that the precondition for success of the movement is a desire for the movement to succeed, and that it is the task of the leaders of the movement to create such a desire. Thus, Ha-am concludes, the push to move settlers to Palestine was premature and attracted the wrong sort of settlers. The settlers' taint hurts the mission of the Chovevi Zion and accounts for its present failures. By turning the organization's focus toward the national ideal, lasting success will be possible.

Reactions to *Lo Zeh Haderekh* were as quick and combative as actual change was slow and painful. Ha-am had presented no practicable alternative to the policy of gradual and continuing settlement. At the same time, Ha-am did spark a debate within the Chovevi Zion about their essential purpose and value as nationalists. Although he had no express intention of becoming a writer, a reluctance reinforced by his choice of a pen name, Ha-am's initial contribution of letters was the spark to a long career of public advocacy and contention.

As Ha-am became more prominent in the world of Russian Zionism, he saw fit to make his first visit to Palestine in February 1891. After nearly three months visiting the settlements and assessing their potential, he returned to Odessa to publish his next major article, *Truth from Eretz Yisrael*.¹⁰⁰ *Truth from Eretz Yisrael* was pessimistic about the ability of the Jewish settlers, or indeed the Jewish people generally, to create the dreamed-of nation in Palestine. The essay opened with a surprising answer to the question of where oppressed Jews should seek their freedom. Rather than arguing that Palestine alone would be the solution, Ha-am contended that both Palestine and America should serve together to ameliorate the Jewish problem. The endorsement of continued Jewish life outside of a Jewish state was surprising, not the least because it foreshadowed debates that would later consume the Zionist movement.

Additionally, *Truth from Eretz Yisrael* foreshadowed two other major developments in Zionism. First, Ha-am noted the likelihood of Arab resistance to ever-expanding Jewish settlement. The Arabs of Palestine were not, as was commonly thought, uncouth and naïve. On the contrary, they understood well what was happening around them. As Jewish settlers increased in number, the Arabs would defend their positions. Compounding that resistance would be the ill-treatment of the Arabs at the hands of the Jewish settlers. Rather than seeing the

Arabs as an easily overcome hindrance, Ha-am recognized the existing population of Palestine as a serious impediment to Jewish settlement.

Second, Ha-am realized the necessity of western European leadership in the Zionist efforts. Eastern European Jews were too poor and too powerless to take action, while the philanthropic approach of relying on wealthy Jews to finance settlements *ad hoc* would never produce more than meager gains. The support and leadership of British Jews especially, would be vital to the establishment of a Jewish state. In recommending that western Jews be brought into the nascent movement, Ha-am presaged Herzl's turn to the British to achieve the goals of political Zionism.

Truth from Eretz Yisrael was followed in 1893 by Ha-am's identically titled chronicle of his second visit to the settlements, this one lasting six weeks. The assessment of the movement was no less dour, but reception of the second article was muted, largely because the criticisms Ha-am had leveled in his first article were now commonly accepted among the Zionist movement. At the same time, Ha-am began to recognize the difficulties inherent on relying on monied interests to establish Jewish settlements, criticizing Baron de Rothschild for forcing overreliance on vineyards and wine production for agricultural development.¹⁰¹

Following his second visit to Palestine, Ha-am spent time in London meeting with potential supporters and becoming thoroughly disappointed in their potential. He returned to Odessa struck with a bout of malaise, which would become his normal mental state through the rest of his life. One source of Ha-am's unease was his failure to become the sort of leader necessary to the success of Bnei Moshe. His recognition of such a failure led to his resignation as the head of the society and taking a new role as its spiritual leader. From that position, Ha-am was responsible for defending Bnei Moshe against a series of serious charges in front of the main

body of Chovevi Zion. His defense was ultimately successful, but it required the revelation of the society's rules and activities that had been previously kept secret. The affair led Ha-am to the opinion that Bnei Moshe had to become a public and transparent organization in order to stay viable. Despite those calls, the organization could never reorganize around new principles of transparency, and Ha-am resigned from his remaining position. While formally persisting until the First Zionist Congress in 1897, Ha-am's resignation marked the end of Bnei Moshe and the first significant period in his Zionist activity.

Herzl and the World Zionist Organization

In eight years, Ha-am had established his importance to Zionism by criticizing the immature tactics of the movement and attempting to correct those mistakes himself. For the next period of his public life, Ha-am turned from corrective action to criticism alone and became more pointed as a result. The beginnings of the Zionist movement had been small, unfocused, and dependent on philanthropy. Under the leadership of Theodor Herzl, Zionism became a viable, international, political movement with specific goals, structure, and a broad base of support. Ha-am established himself on the outside of the movement, but his writing was more than enough to maintain his significance to the movement and the Jewish community as Zionism became more of a general concern.

On August 29, 1897, the first World Zionist Congress was convened by Theodor Herzl in Basel, Switzerland. This meeting represented the first real attempt to coalesce far-flung thinkers and advocates into an authoritative Zionist voice. The Congress followed Herzl's publication of *der Judenstaat* and his subsequent failure to garner the public support of Jewish power brokers in European capitals. The simple idea of the Congress was that a unified Zionist movement would bring Jewish masses to the idea and build public support for a Jewish homeland. For the first

time, there was an organization under whose banner the cause of Zionism might be prosecuted.¹⁰²

The World Zionist Organization would meet fifteen times between 1897 and Ha-am's death in 1927, but Ha-am would only attend twice. Prior to the first Congress, Ha-am remained curiously silent about its prospects, though he did tell a friend that his own reputation as a pessimist would limit the impact of any criticism he might level in advance. At the same time, he could not bring himself to praise the conference in any meaningful way,¹⁰³ despite Herzl's direct invitation to the Congress. Once in Basel, Ha-am felt slighted by Herzl who was, of course, only recently attached to the Zionist cause. Herzl had no sense of the difference between Ha-am, who shared Herzl's goals but not his priorities, and the anti-Zionists who opposed the goals of the Congress outright. Ha-am commented that he felt out of place at the Congress, "like a mourner at a wedding."¹⁰⁴

Ha-am's substantive answer to the World Zionist Congress came later that year in *The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem*. Ha-am railed against the assimilation of the Jews who had pushed the agenda in Basel, accused them of promising far more than they could deliver, and criticized their reliance on diplomacy as a means to achieve their goals. He also felt put off by the appeal to the masses as it conflicted with his own model of elite leadership. Perhaps above all, Ha-am felt abandoned by the men who had joined him as Chovevi Zion and now swore their allegiance to a movement of inexperienced upstarts who were too dependent on fealty to their *arriviste* leader, treating him as the Messiah. The "din of Basel" had wiped out what was left of the Chovevi Zion organization, leaving Ha-am to undertake his criticism alone. He became, in short order, "the most dreaded and best hated critic of the Zionist Organization."¹⁰⁵

Ha-am's profile was raised by virtue of the object of his criticism. The new prominence of the Zionist movement meant that Ha-am was no longer speaking to and for the relatively small collection of Odessan Jews, but instead to the whole of world Jewry that the World Zionist Organization sought to unite. In recognition of that reality, Ha-am also sought to distinguish Herzlian Zionism from the more established Zionism of eastern Europe. Rather than being driven by the concern of antisemitism as Herzl was, Jews in the east were motivated by the desire for Jewish culture and national spirit above all. Founding a state would not alleviate the suffering of Jews outside of its borders, and so there must be another, more enduring goal for Jewish nationalism. The divide between east and west may have been somewhat artificial given that disenfranchised eastern Jews were more likely to find relief in a Jewish state and were pushed just as hard for political solutions, but it encapsulated the criticism Ha-am would continue to levy against political Zionism for decades.

Four years after Ha-am first engaged political Zionism in print, he took the tenth anniversary of Leon Pinsker's death as an opportunity to deepen his criticism of Herzl by comparing him to Pinsker. Specifically, Ha-am compared the relative strength of the cases made for Zionism by Herzl's *der Judenstaat* and Pinsker's *Autoemanzipation*. Given his conflict with Herzl and his personal attachment to Pinsker, it was no surprise that Ha-am judged the latter's work the better. The work, originally published as *Theory and Practice* but appearing in translation as *Pinsker and Political Zionism*, is Ha-am's attempt to reconcile the origins of Zionism with the break that Herzl represented. Ha-am praised the work that Pinsker did under the banner of Chovevi Zion, attributing whatever success the movement had enjoyed to Pinsker's perseverance rather than Herzl's vision, arguing that all of Herzl's work was presaged and surpassed by Pinsker's program. Pinsker's superiority to Herzl, according to Ha-am, was also

partially a result of his broader concern for the Jewish nation, not simply the Jewish state. Thus Ha-am linked Pinsker's program to his own ideology and provided himself a more concrete authority from which to critique the World Zionist Organization.

Zionism after Herzl's death

The next two years brought about significant changes for Ha-am. First, he resigned from the editorship of *HaShiloach*, the Hebrew-language journal he had founded. Second, Herzl's death in 1904 drastically changed the Zionist leadership and left Ha-am without his primary point of attack on political Zionism. Herzl's death augured a change in the World Zionist Organization and a subsequent change in Ha-am's assessment of the movement. Without Herzl and the attendant "messianic illusion," the World Zionist Organization shifted priorities to include cultural and practical activities rather than diplomatic ones; the Zionist Organization "became more and more like a Herzlian body with an Ahad Ha-am soul."¹⁰⁶ Without Herzl's leadership, however, Ha-am's criticism was less prominent.

Having left *HaShiloach* and adopted a progressively more sympathetic attitude toward the Zionist Organization, Ha-am's third important period proceeded from 1904 until the beginning of World War I, when his work effectively ended. During this time, Ha-am served as a mentor and advisor to Chaim Weizmann, a leader of the Zionist movement after Herzl, and the chief advocate of synthetic Zionism, which consciously blended political and cultural Zionist ideals. The growing maturity of the movement pushed Ha-am's writing in a more abstract direction, away from the need to respond to the events of the day, allowing him to spend more time crafting his arguments.

One of the most important arguments from this period was contained in the essay *Moses*. What Ha-am called "an exercise in homiletics," was his attempt to define ideal Jewish leadership

through comparison to the historical figure of Moses.¹⁰⁷ In the wake of Herzl's death and the divisive debate over the British offer of land in east Africa (in lieu of Palestine), Ha-am watched the movement flounder for want of a figure around whom they could coalesce.¹⁰⁸ However, the events of the day prevented Ha-am from fully reaching his audience. As *Moses* was published, conditions for all workers in Russia had deteriorated to the point that revolution was afoot. Zionists faced the question of how they could join the general calls for political liberalism without abandoning the uniquely Jewish concerns that defined the movement. Younger Jews did not identify as Zionists *per se*, preferring to identify with the broader struggle. Ha-am endorsed a joining of the Zionist membership with organizations dedicated to effecting political change within Russia but did not join those organizations himself.¹⁰⁹ The concern with domestic political reform overshadowed Ha-am's message in *Moses* regarding Zionism's future, but the essay remained important among his followers and in later collections of his work.

With the political questions of Zionism temporarily sidelined, Ha-am turned to an essay that represents one of his only attempts at pure scholarship. *The Supremacy of Reason*, developed from an address to the Jewish Club in Odessa, was an examination of the great Jewish scholar Moses Maimonides.¹¹⁰ Despite the academic tone, *The Supremacy of Reason* still invites comparison between Ha-am and Maimonides, particularly with regard to the nature of the spiritual center he envisioned taking root in Palestine and the willingness of the intellectual to sacrifice personal glory for the achievement of higher purposes.¹¹¹ As the lead essay in the final volume of Ha-am's collected works, *The Supremacy of Reason* remains important today.

In 1911, the Zionist Organization returned to Basel for the Tenth Zionist Congress, and for the first time since the first Congress, Ha-am attended while traveling to Palestine for another visit. The following year, Ha-am published one of his last essays *Summa Summarum*. *Summa*

Summarum took a fundamentally more positive view of Zionism than Ha-am had previously expressed, largely reflecting the change in the Zionist Organization to incorporate some of Ha-am's earlier criticisms. *Summa Summarum* also connected the end of Ha-am's writing life with the two *Truth from Eretz Yisrael* essays that he had published near the beginning. The work toward both settlements and cultural revival were proceeding apace and Ha-am felt that the movement had changed for the better. While official Zionist responses were critical of the essay, the public response was positive and indicated that Ha-am's esteem within the movement was much improved.¹¹² Even the official criticisms Ha-am saw as something of an empty reflex to formally maintain loyalty to Herzl, while the unacknowledged inclusion of Ha-am's own positions in the position statements was testament to his role in the movement.¹¹³

Following the publication of *Summa Summarum*, Ha-am declared his literary career finished. For the remainder of his life, Ha-am would stay active in the Zionist movement as an advisor and negotiator but would no longer take the role of public advocate. Thus Ha-am's rhetorical career is easily divided into three periods: the Chovevi Zion period (1889-1897) that preceded the rise of political Zionism, the contentious period (1897-1904) in which he battled with Herzl and the newly-formed World Zionist Organization, and the post-Herzl period (1904-1912) when Ha-am found implicit acceptance and summarized two and half decades of work on behalf of a Jewish ideal.

Method and Outline

The examination of Ha-am's rhetoric proposed here, as opposed to traditional historical approaches to events and activities, traces his ideology and influence in a unique way. By looking to the arguments Ha-am made and the manner in which he justified those arguments, especially over the two and half decades of his active writing career, I will trace his rhetorical

trajectory. Drawing on Kenneth Burke's notion of qualitative progression, Leland Griffin explains the concept of trajectory as "the salience and/or sequence of good and evil terms in a body of discourse suggestive of the qualities, motivations, or state of mind of a speaker or writer."¹¹⁴ From such a state of mind, "another state of mind can appropriately follow."¹¹⁵ As an audience following the symbolic choices of a rhetor, those choices affect the way they see the world, first by creating a social understanding of reality,¹¹⁶ and by then creating motivation for specific action, or an ideology. Ideology "makes the body hop around in certain ways; and that same body would have hopped around in different ways"¹¹⁷ had it been under the influence of a different ideology. Insofar as rhetoric is intended for an audience, the trajectory describes not only the direction in which the rhetor is pointing the audience, but also the symbolic means of moving the audience itself. At the same time that the trajectory moves the audience, Griffin notes that rhetoric "maketh a ready man,"¹¹⁸ in that it acts on the rhetor as much as the audience. The rhetor is affected by the symbolic choices in the rhetoric as much as the audience may be.¹¹⁹

Throughout his career, Ha-am presents a rhetorical trajectory for Zionism that is markedly apart from the dominant ideology. Ha-am did not craft his arguments simply to curry favor or win short-term political battles, but instead to reshape his audience's understanding of what it meant to be Jewish and the relationship between Judaism and a political state. Particularly when read in opposition to other symbol systems,¹²⁰ the concept of the rhetorical trajectory leads to a clearer picture of how a particular symbol system functioned in its time and how it continues to function today.

In the project to follow, I address Ha-am's rhetoric in each of these three periods by focusing on his major works and drawing in secondary essays to illustrate themes of advocacy, ideology, and style. Ha-am's work was, in many cases, driven by contemporary events, and he

never attempted to summarize his philosophy in a comprehensive work. As a result, he is considered a scattered or disjunct thinker. In reality, his rhetoric shows remarkable consistency, particularly given the length of his career. In chapter two, I focus on Ha-am's initial forays into public life beginning with *Lo Zeh Haderekh* and the two essays entitled *Truth from Eretz Yisrael* through the convening of the first World Zionist Congress in 1897. In chapter three, I look to Ha-am's work as the counterpoint to Herzl in *The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem* and *Pinsker and Political Zionism*. In chapter four, I address the conclusion of Ha-am's career from Herzl's death in 1904 through his unofficial retirement in 1912, looking to *Moses*, *The Supremacy of Reason*, and *Summa Summarum* as the key works. In each period, I will develop themes, arguments, and tropes that recur within the period, but also look for connections to works from earlier periods to see how Ha-am's rhetorical trajectory develops over time, particularly in response to the pogroms that embodied antisemitism, the rise of the political Zionist movement, and the maturation of Zionism into an effective political force. Finally, in chapter five I will draw implications from the outlined trajectory of Ha-am's rhetoric for rhetorical study, the study of Zionism, and the role of cultural Zionism in modern Israel.

Conclusion

Ahad Ha-am remains a significant figure in Zionist history, though he is usually judged by the wrong standards. In comparison to Herzl's image as a man of action on behalf of a Jewish state, all other early Zionist thinkers appear to fade into the recesses of history. As a thinker, however, Herzl was shallow. He proposed a state of Jews, but nothing like a distinctly Jewish state.¹²¹ As the conscience of the Zionist movement, Ahad Ha-am set about the task of making the Jewish state thoroughly Jewish by redefining and then fortifying what it meant to be Jewish

in the first place. As a thinker and critic of Zionism, as well as a lover of Zion, Ahad Ha-am has few equals.

Chapter Two: The Way and the Truth: Ha-am and the Chovevi Zion

The 1880s marked the initial efforts of what would later become the Zionist movement. Asher Ginsburg, still unpublished, watched as the Chovevi Zion supported settlement activity with enthusiastic advocacy but tepid finances. Despite a position on the Executive Committee, Ginsburg could not push the organization to what he saw as a more productive approach to building a new state. Having been drafted to lead a quasi-secret faction of younger members within the Chovevi Zion, Ginsburg began his career by setting out a new agenda for the nascent Zionist movement. Beginning with his first publication, *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, and ending with his landmark observations of the troubling state of the settlements in *Truth from Eretz Israel*, Ahad Ha-am laid out the ideology of what would become cultural Zionism. In this chapter, I analyze Ha-am's first period of Zionist rhetoric by focusing on his major works, *Lo Zeh Haderekh* and *Truth from Eretz Israel*, as well as a series of short essays he published, collectively titled *Fragments*. The ideology that emerges is reasonably complete, revolutionary in some ways, and designed for a distinctly Jewish nation.

Plans for Settlement

Efforts to establish settlements in Palestine began in earnest in the early 1880s. The imposition of the May Laws that eliminated legal rights for Jews throughout the Russian Empire and the subsequent pogroms left many previously skeptical Russian Jews turning to Palestine as a refuge from oppression. Settlements dedicated to agriculture were established all over the land, from near Jaffa on the Mediterranean coast to north of the Sea of Galilee.¹ Jews from eastern Europe moved to buy their own land or to work collective lands. The available land was generally of poor quality with most of the arable land already owned and worked by Arab Palestinians and what remained was "an unproductive wasteland...barren desert."² Problems

with the land were exacerbated by the settlers' lack of agricultural knowledge. With "more enthusiasm than training," and little sense of the physical difficulty of agricultural work, the settlers were ill-equipped to farm in such a difficult place.³ Beyond their own inability, the settlers were further diminished in spirit and number by the prevalence of disease, particularly malaria. Finally, the exhausted condition of the settlers left them unable to protect their lands against Arabs grazing their cattle, or worse, outright raids.⁴

These difficulties persisted despite the support of the Chovevi Zion. In 1884, Pinsker had organized a conference to coordinate the activities of the various Chovevi Zion organizations. The conference delegates decided to set financing settlements in Palestine as their highest priority.⁵ The philanthropic approach not only ignored the need for political recognition, but was also woefully underfunded, contributing only 15-20,000 rubles per year to the cause.⁶ Pledges from Chovevi Zion chapters were often unfulfilled and the central organization was facing mounting debt.⁷ As material and moral support for settlement waned, many of the settlers fled, some even returning to the Russian Pale.⁸

As much as the initial passion for settlement was driven by a utopian idealism, the reality of unskilled workers on unsuitable land was difficult to avoid. Salvation appeared in the form of Baron Edmund de Rothschild, a French Jewish philanthropist. Previously, Rothschild had rejected a request from Chovevi Zion to support the settlements, but when a settler representative appealed to him directly, he was moved to begin contributing.⁹ Rothschild was able to single-handedly support the majority of settlements, though his support was conditioned on very direct control of their agricultural activities.¹⁰ When some of the settlements were told to specialize in viticulture and winemaking, their products were noncompetitive and Rothschild chose to buy them himself in order to maintain the appearance of financial viability.¹¹ Ultimately,

Rothschild's support irreparably harmed the settlers' independence, costing them all of their initiative and leaving them no other avenue for help in difficult times.¹²

As a member of the Chovevi Zion Executive Committee, Asher Ginsberg had a view to the whole situation in Palestine and the Chovevi Zion's ineffectiveness in addressing the problems. At the insistence of a disaffected settler who had returned to Odessa to request assistance, Ginsberg formed his secret group, Bnei Moshe, in an attempt to reform Chovevi Zion from the inside out. While the Bnei Moshe was taking shape, the editor of a Hebrew paper in St. Petersburg, *Hamelitz*, requested that Ginsberg submit a contribution to the paper. Despite his professed despair at completing the task, Ginsberg ultimately did submit an essay in late 1888. Appearing in the spring of 1889, the essay was titled *Lo Zeh Haderekh* (This is Not The Way) and was a direct attack on the Zionist movement to that point.

Lo Zeh Haderekh

Ginsberg chose to publish *Lo Zeh Haderekh* under the pen name Ahad Ha-am in reference to his unprofessional standing as a writer. The *nom de plume* was presumably selected to deflect any suggestions about his ambitions. That said, the phrase *ahad ha-am* appears in the Torah only one time (Genesis 26:10) and there it references a king.¹³ Thus Ginsberg's choice of pen name represented the ambiguity about power that he would embrace. As Ahad Ha-am, he was simply one of the people, though he could be considered first among those people.

This first publication was significant not only because it launched Ginsberg's career as Ahad Ha-am, critic of the Zionist movement, but because it demonstrated the rhetorical structure Ha-am would consistently use throughout his first period of writing. It contains all of the major elements of the cultural Zionist program he would advocate and it created a clear distinction between the values of the Zionist movement at the time and those that constituted the rhetorical

vision Ha-am held for the Jewish nation. Modesty about his writing aside, *Lo Zeh Haderekh* was a bold statement about the past and future of the Zionist movement. The essay contained, in some form or another, the entirety of the cultural Zionist program that Ha-am would spend his career advocating. Simon notes that “[a]s a contribution to the solution of the practical problem of Hibbath Zion policy, *Lo Zeh Haderekh* was of no great value; as challenge to accepted ideas and a call to serious thinking about the larger ideas of Jewish nationalism, it was epoch-making.”¹⁴ In truth, the same epithet could apply to much of Ha-am’s writing given his focus on ideals rather than specific courses of action.

Structurally, *Lo Zeh Haderekh* established a pattern to which Ha-am returned again and again in his early period.¹⁵ The essay begins with a description of the problem faced by the Jewish community, followed by a discussion of general philosophical principles, before applying the principles to solve the problem from the first section. In this case, the problem is the difficulty faced by Chovevi Zion in maintaining enthusiasm for the cause of settlement. Ha-am praises those “first ‘nationalists’” who “had no longer the patience to wait for miracles.”¹⁶ Settlement activity forced the opponents of the movement, though presumably only those within the Jewish community, to “grudgingly...admit that after all it showed signs of life and was worthy of attention.”¹⁷ The initial success could not be sustained however, and Ha-am notes the movement “has ceased to win new adherents, and even its old adherents seem to lose their energy, and ask for nothing more than the well-being of the few poor colonies already in existence.”¹⁸ Ultimately, however, “even this modest demand remains unfulfilled.”¹⁹

Ha-am then moves to the alleged causes of the problem, before dismissing both the long-standing mechanisms of foreign charity for Jews in Palestine and the newfound support of Rothschild as insufficient to explain the failure. Ha-am also argues that if either of these were to

be the cause, it would “be a sorry ‘national movement’ which depends for its success on the generosity of a philanthropist and the kindness of his agents.” Indeed, the movement would be questionable if “certain individuals, be they who they may, are in a position to obstruct the progress of the whole nation.”²⁰ Instead, Ha-am contends that the cause of the movement’s difficulties is “the ‘victory’ which the idea has achieved prematurely through the fault of its champions.”²¹ Recognizing that such a claim would be difficult for many to accept, Ha-am does not elaborate any further until he addresses a series of general principles. Ha-am proceeds to lay out the “three judgments” that underlie any belief that would induce action: “the attainment of a certain object is felt by us to be needed; secondly, that certain actions are the means to attainment of that object; and thirdly, that those actions are not beyond our power, and the effort which they require is not so great as to outweigh the value of the object in our estimation.”²² Ha-am then contrasts movements that need to appeal solely to the solvency of particular actions and fall entirely into the sphere of reason with those movements that need to establish the desirability of a goal relative to the effort required and fall into the realm of sentiment. Such movements are first aimed at attracting the adherence of “those whose sensibilities are quick, and who are governed by their feelings.”²³ Those early adherents will put forth effort, though it may be unskilled and ineffective, and their effort alone will capture the attention of “the great men, the leaders, and the thinkers.”²⁴

From here, Ha-am returns to his discussion of the Jewish situation by claiming that the settlement movement needs to establish the value of its goal and thus should appeal to “the devotion and the desire which are felt for its ideal...the devotion of the individual to the well-being of the community”²⁵ Ha-am continues through a lengthy discussion of the shifting of Jewish concerns from the national identity to the “fate of the righteous individual,”²⁶ placing

blame for the settlers' plight on such a shift in priorities. Ha-am establishes the Jewish community's values in this way so that he can finally ask, "what ought we to have done?"²⁷

Ha-am's next paragraph is the preface to all cultural Zionism; "It follows from what has been said above that we ought to have made it our first object to bring about a *revival* [emphasis in original]—to inspire men with a deeper attachment to the national life, and a more ardent desire for the national well-being."²⁸ Ha-am notes that this was not the policy of the first Zionists, that instead, "as Jews, they had a spice of individualism in their nationalism."²⁹ Instead the early promoters of settlement appealed to the individualistic motives of the settlers, which pleased the promoters, but did not benefit either the individual settlers or the nation as a whole. The settlers were not prepared, either by training or temperament, to do the necessary work and so spent their time clamoring for their own unrealized individual profits. Ha-am concludes, "[w]hat wonder, then, that so great an ideal, presented in so unworthy a form, can no longer gain adherents...when it becomes generally known that the expectation has not been realised, and self-interest bids men keep away? This, then, is the wrong way."³⁰

Ha-am includes an acknowledgement that it is no longer possible to start over in his idealized vision. He does, however, reinforce the necessity of "the heart of the people" as the basis on which a Jewish nation would be established. Ha-am proposes that, moving forward, the movement must "endeavour to give the idea itself strong roots and to strengthen and deepen its hold on the Jewish people, not by force, but by spirit."³¹

This structure is replicated in almost all of Ha-am's essays during this period. In each case, Ha-am addresses a "striking and subversive truth,"³² and recognizes that his audience will find the truth objectionable. He presents his conclusion early and only then moves to justify that conclusion. From the outset of his political career, Ha-am knew that he would be advocating

unpopular opinions and the structure he uses as an essayist seems the best way to accommodate the resistance he would be sure to face with each new essay.

Ha-am's structure also reveals something of his approach to Jewish nationalism. Cultural Zionism was premised, in part, on the idea that the Jewish nation was comparable to other nations. The Jewish nation was distinct from the French or German or Russian nations, but certain forces would act on each nation in the same way. The second section of Ha-am's essays usually turned to general philosophical and historical principles to find those common forces. In *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, the three judgments and the attendant rhetorical obligations of each are not specific to Jewish ideas nor are they distinctly Jewish judgments. Whatever truth is in the principles is applicable across national identities.

The universality of these principles is necessary to Ha-am's argument for a nationhood that goes beyond religious practice. If the Jewish nation were immune to the influences on the French nation, or if the forces that were relevant to the Jewish nation were unique to Judaism, then a Jewish nation would not rank among the other nations of the world. Ha-am asks, "Why are we so different from any other race or nation?"³³ By repeatedly applying these principles which are applicable to other nations to the Jewish nation, and seeing them effective in every context, Ha-am argues that the Jewish nation is no different than any other. In short, this structure not only allows Ha-am to advocate unpopular arguments but to do so in a way that justifies his broader philosophy. Mintz demonstrates the importance of this structure to Ha-am's nonpolitical essays, but it is clearly just as important to his political arguments as well.

Beyond the structure though, *Lo Zeh Haderekh* was the initial expression of the philosophy of cultural Zionism. Two primary values are evident in Ha-am's program: the nation and the spirit. A third value, religious belief, is conspicuous in its absence. *Lo Zeh Haderekh*

explicitly couches the problems with the settlement movement in the conflict between the national good and the individual benefit.

In the beginning, Ha-am argues, “all the blessings and curses of the Law of Moses have but one unvarying object: the well-being of the nation as a whole in the land of its inheritance.”³⁴ Following the destruction of the First Temple, Ha-am traces a change in the Jewish value hierarchy to prioritize the well-being of the individual over the well-being of the nation. The national ideal nonetheless persisted until the political life of the Jewish people was replaced by the religious life, more focused on individual goodness and righteousness than the nation. Ha-am then attributes the oppression of the moment with intensifying the Jewish focus on the individual over the collective.

This is the value hierarchy into which Ha-am says the Zionist movement emerged. To achieve some measure of success faster, the “first champions” of Zionism appealed to those individualist motives. Their pitch for settlement was based on the ease of finding material affluence in the bounty of the new land. When such a bounty was difficult to obtain, the settlers made a “loud and bitter outcry” for their own benefits, “regardless of any distinction between what is legitimate and what is not.”³⁵ Ha-am argues that the pursuit of individual aims undermines the work for the national good.

When Ha-am asks “[w]hat ought we to have done,” his answer is, above all, a reversal of the values of the Jewish community. Replacing the individualistic motive with the “more ardent desire for the national well-being” is of primary significance.³⁶ That Ha-am turned to values above specific action in his fixative proposal is significant. Again, he acknowledges that such an approach would delay any concrete results, but it would be better for the movement as a whole.

What is absent is much discussion of the role of religious belief in the Jewish nation. Early in the essay, Ha-am contrasts the nationalist view against the idea that “we...are held together only by the bond of religion.”³⁷ Historically, Ha-am sees the religious ideal replacing the nationalist ideal and religious thought actively aiding the shift in priorities. Thus it is clear that Ha-am finds the Jewish nation to exist beyond the realm of religion such that Jews are bound to each other by something other than a common faith. This idea was, in its time, still new. Driven by the *haskalah* movement of Jewish enlightenment, Ha-am held that religion was a part of Jewish history and an influence on all Jews, regardless of their personal beliefs and practices. That said, religion was not the sum of Jewish identity and the nation would find its basis outside of religious grounds.

Given Ha-am’s distinction between religion and the nation, his second affirmative value seems a strange choice. Throughout *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, Ha-am builds the idea of “spirit” into a guiding force for his political program. Ha-am concludes the essay by naming spirit, as opposed to force, the proper mechanism for strengthening the idea of Jewish nationalism. Spirit is evident in the early nationalists “who had no longer the patience to wait for miracles,” and chose to take up the banner of the Jewish homeland.³⁸ That spirit was flagging in the face of settlement difficulties as the “old adherents seem to lose their energy,”³⁹ and would need to be revived in order to see the settlement endeavor succeed.

Alongside spirit, Ha-am develops the importance of sentiment. The national sentiment is an ideal that was weakened over time and is further weakened by widespread oppression. Appealing to sentiment is the key for moving the settlements forward. In the long run, the feeling that the national well-being is supreme must take precedence. The movement needs to make “the devotion and the desire which are felt for its ideal and instrument for the strengthening of

faith.”⁴⁰ Faith here refers to the national ideal, so that Ha-am’s notion of sentiment goes hand-in-hand with his valorization of spirit as the means to repair the settlement movement.

Spirit is, of course, a relatively nebulous course of action, but nonetheless it is the sum total of Ha-am’s proposed course of action. Ha-am appeals to “the heart of the people” as the basis on which “the land will be regenerated.”⁴¹ He immediately recognizes that there will be “the possibility of doing actual work,” but only “in time.”⁴² In a second essay that appears under the same title of *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, Ha-am responds to criticism that he is overly focused on theory by arguing that “propaganda could be made only by work competently done...quality and not quantity must be our concern.”⁴³ The work of settlement would inspire the spirit in others, but the work could not be an end in itself until the time was right for organized effort. Of course, such a time would not come until the national spirit was prepared.

Ha-am also offers an argument against antisemitism as the primary justification for a Jewish state:

For eighteen hundred years we did not move a finger for the colonisation of our land, because we did not expect it to bring us advantage as individuals. In recent years we have paid attention to the colonisation of our land, because reports and statistics have led us to hope that it will bring us advantage as individuals. But now, when we see that a long time and a great deal of money will be needed to put the colonies already founded into a satisfactory condition, it becomes clear that from the point of view of individual self-interest the thing is not worth while; and so we have quite justifiably lost heart, and the colonisation of our land has become a charitable affair, which affords scant subsistence to some hundreds of people “in the last stage of poverty.”⁴⁴

Here Ha-am dismisses the idea of a Jewish state as an easy solution to the Jewish problem. Because the process of colonization had proven more difficult than expected, there was little chance that a new Jewish state could be established with enough haste to be a benefit to the oppressed Jews of eastern Europe. Since Jews of the west were in considerably less dire circumstances, Ha-am's assumption was that only profit would drive them to settle in Palestine, thus perpetuating the diaspora. Western Jews would be unlikely to support the "charitable affair" to resettle eastern Jews, meaning that antisemitism alone would be an insufficient motive for action. As noted above, Ha-am saw antisemitism as a factor in the shifting priorities of the Jewish community, pushing away from the national interest. That the effects of antisemitism would still not push western Jews to support the settlement activities is a clear signal of not only the misplaced values of the Jewish community but also a misplaced focus on the part of advocates for settlements.

Ha-am set the goals for *Lo Zeh Haderekh* from the very title of the essay. Simon's observation that the essay was of little practical solvency is both accurate and blind to its explicit purpose. Pointing out the "wrong way" does not necessitate knowing the "right way" instead. Though the germ of Ha-am's program is apparent in hindsight, *Lo Zeh Haderekh* is poorly developed as an affirmative statement on the values and direction of the settlement movement. *Lo Zeh Haderekh* was the opening move in what would become a decades-long attempt to reshape Zionism, but it could be no more than that opening. As Ha-am continued to publish, he sharpened the ideals and prescriptions that had begun to form.

Fragments

Following the publication of *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, Ha-am became a public figure within the eastern European Jewish community. Sensing an audience for his thoughts, he proceeded to

write eight essays for the Hebrew language journal *Pardess* from 1891 through 1893. These essays would be included in Ha-am's first collection as the "Fragments." Each essay is fairly short, addressed to some current topic in the Jewish world (not necessarily Zionism), and (except for *Two Masters*) each is titled with a pair of dialectically opposed terms. While the subject matter changed, both from *Lo Zeh Haderekh* and within the series, the themes and values Ha-am champions did not, even as he developed some of them in more detail.

Just as in *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, Ha-am uses the structure of his essay to demonstrate the commonalities between the Jewish nation and all other nations. In *Positive and Negative*, for example, Ha-am outlines a theory of social conflict based on the sort of change sought by one side in spiritual conflict. There are, in Ha-am's conception, positive systems that seek change by presenting some new truth or satisfying some new need, negative systems that seek only to overthrow the incumbent thinking, and the middle ground where negatives bide their time until they can latch onto an appropriate positive and positives tolerate the negatives for the energy to achieve their goals. While Ha-am illustrates this movement typology with examples from Jewish history, he also makes references to Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation to support his claim. Referencing Western learning becomes a common theme for Ha-am, which reinforces his vision of the Jewish nation, but also his personal familiarity with that body of knowledge.

In *Sacred and Profane*, Ha-am makes passing reference to Copernicus, Kepler and Newton, while also demonstrating considerable familiarity with Plato.⁴⁵ A reference to Adam Smith in *Justice and Mercy* bolsters Ha-am's argument about the role of conscience in social progress.⁴⁶ In later essays, Ha-am cites David Hume, John Stuart Mill, Ernest Renan, and Henri Bergson, and John Fiske.⁴⁷ These citations are rarely developed in any detail but serve to establish Ha-am's credibility as a writer familiar with Western philosophy, congruent with his

image as a *maskil*, or a Jew who studied modern and secular learning. Particularly for a young writer, overshadowed by more experienced and established voices, even this small measure of credibility would go a long way to creating a space for Ha-am's voice.

Ha-am's identification with the *haskalah* movement had its limits, however. In *Positive and Negative*, Ha-am identifies a forerunner of the *haskalah* as the example of a middle ground movement. Among western Jews, there had long existed groups that would seek to negate the existing practices of Judaism, but they remained relatively silent for lack of a positive alternative. The need for national citizenship would come to provide that alternative and the advocates of the two positions became united. Unfortunately, the union went too far in overthrowing the old system; "[i]t had not stopped short at primitive beliefs and outworn customs, but had affected the very essentials of national life and national unity."⁴⁸ Undermining the national ideal was a violation of Ha-am's most important value, and thus condemned without hesitation. The movement of Ha-am's day was distinguished because it "restor[ed] equilibrium between old and new, by clothing both in a single new form."⁴⁹

By returning to the national ideal he espoused in *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, Ha-am also uses the Fragments to expand the applicability of his philosophy. Of particular note is Ha-am's emerging vision of the role of religion in Jewish identity. While Ha-am does not see religion as a sufficient basis for a Jewish nation, he is also not willing to discount the role of religious belief and practice in the history or future of that nation. In *Sacred and Profane*, Ha-am distinguishes between profane items that have value for the ends to which they can be put and are discarded when those ends have been achieved, and sacred items that obtain and retain value from the end itself. To illustrate the argument, Ha-am turns to the Jewish practice of writing the Torah on parchment scrolls despite the existence of better methods of bookmaking, including the printing

press and modern binding. Ha-am explains, “[f]or ordinary books, of course, we use the improved modern methods; but in the case of books devoted to sacred purposes, everything, even the mode of writing, is sacred.”⁵⁰ The less efficient and less durable form of production persists because of the contents of that form. Because the scrolls convey sacred material, the form they take must remain unchanged.

In the immediate context then, Ha-am admonishes the “Reformers” who would “strip the shell of practical observance from our religion, and retain only the kernel,...strip our sacred writings of their original language, and retain only their kernel in translations.”⁵¹ Ha-am adopts the metaphor of wine in the cask to accuse the reformers of breaking the cask when, in fact, it is the cask itself “that is holy, and sanctifies all that is in it.”⁵² By comparison, the Jewish people have “not violently attacked those of its teachers who have filled its cask with new wine from foreign vintages...it has never ceased to honor and reverence them.”⁵³ Ha-am concludes, “[l]augh who will at the zealous regard for the cask: the history of those who have treasured the wine will give him pause.”⁵⁴ In short, Ha-am argues for the value of retaining religious tradition because of the intrinsic value of tradition to a national identity. In the absence of a national home, religion had long been the organizing principle for the Jewish nation and the element that separated the Jews from other nations. Casting religion out would have denied a major component of Jewish culture and identity. If for no other reason than its historical significance, cultural Zionism required an embrace of religious tradition.

At the same time, Ha-am undermines the basic assumptions behind Judaism as a religion. Judaism is an orthopractic religion; observance of the law is the highest aspiration of faith. In *Anticipations and Survivals*, Ha-am turns to law itself. First, Ha-am makes a crucial move in separating “the law” into the various laws that constitute the larger corpus of accepted practice.

Individual laws, Ha-am then says, “are not all observed and obeyed at all times in the same degree; that in all countries and in all ages there are certain laws...disregarded by those who administer justice.”⁵⁵ In other words, law changes within itself and should not be regarded as a static body of practice. Ha-am contended that Jews had long treated observance of the law as the ideal of the nation’s spiritual life, when the law was instead intended as support for the national ideal. Because the nation persists despite changes in the observance of the law, the nation transcends the law:

We are, indeed, in the habit of thinking that Israel was kept alive by the Law alone. But our remote ancestors, who handed down the Law to us, admitted that the Law itself only lived in our keeping for the sake of the future, and that, if not for the future, there would have been no real reason for its preservation.⁵⁶

As evidence of these changes, Ha-am points to slim historical evidence of “double polytheism” in early Jewish communities where “household gods” were maintained until the rise of nations. Such a rise meant that the role of the household gods “was filled by national gods.”⁵⁷ Later in Jewish history, Ha-am points to the incorporation of “Arabic philosophy” to understand natural phenomena⁵⁸ and the use of Greek philosophy “as an instrument for revealing the essential spirit of Judaism.”⁵⁹ In both cases, the religious ideal of Judaism was fungible and inconstant.

Just as importantly, the preeminence of religion restricted the Jewish community from pursuing the national ideal, even as the idea of returning to Zion remained:

For now that the religious ideal had conquered the national, the nation could no longer be satisfied with little, or be content to see in the return to Zion merely its own national salvation. “The land of Israel” must be “spread over all the lands,” in order “to set the world right by the kingdom of the Eternal,” in order that “all have breath in their nostrils

might say, the Lord God of Israel is King.” And so, hoping for more than it could possibly achieve, the nation ceased gradually to do even what it could achieve; and the idea of the return to Zion, wrapped in a cloud of phantasies and visions, withdrew from the world of action and could no longer be a direct stimulus to practical effort.⁶⁰

In this way, religion inhibited the national ideal. Nonetheless, religion was an intrinsic part of Jewish history.

Ha-am condemns “that other section” of Jewish thinkers who “[seek] salvation in a Future not connected with our Past, and [believe] that after a history extending over thousands of years a people can begin all over again, like a newborn child, and create for itself a new national land, and new national life and aims.”⁶¹ Ha-am respected history, even if he saw elements of it as misguided. Discarding history would mean discarding the very things that brought the nascent Zionist movement to its earliest points and abandoning the common bonds among all Jews around the world.

The practice of religion thus informs the Jewish community, even in the absence of genuine belief. The *haskalah* movement had “historicized religious rituals,”⁶² but Ha-am maintained the cultural purpose of religion. Zipperstein attributes the union of secular and religion Jews in the Chovevi Zion to mere convenience, but Ha-am clearly saw something more valuable in appealing to religion. Obviously, an outright repudiation of religion would alienate wide swaths of the community, not to mention the rabbis who exercised influence over their congregations. By reinforcing the value of religious practice, Ha-am was working to keep religious Jews in the folds of the Chovevi Zion.

More importantly though, Ha-am’s embrace of religious tradition supported the basic program of cultural Zionism. In as much as culture is the body of wisdom received from history

and passed down in the form of accepted ways of life, religion is one form of culture. Ha-am said as much in a letter late in his life, but the premise was clear even at this early stage.⁶³ The political advantages of supporting religion were clear, but that support was also key to Ha-am's ideological consistency. Raised in the Hasidic tradition, there was no doubt that Ha-am knew from whence he spoke on matters of religion practice. Despite rejecting that practice for himself, Ha-am's vision of a Jewish state was inextricably bound to the religious history of the Jewish people. A Zionism that intentionally abandoned religion would go too far, as the prior movement for citizenship Ha-am referenced in *Positive and Negative* did. The Jewish nation would not be complete unless both religious and non-religious Jews were fully included.

Unity was only one element of Ha-am's national ideal. In the Fragments, Ha-am directs his attention to a more specific outline of the nation to which he believes the Jewish nation should aspire by looking to the sources of national identity and the role a political entity would play in the life of the broader nation. This national ideal, valuing the collective well-being over the benefit or profit of the individual, is the highest value in Ha-am's ideology. Even in the service of other ostensibly positive goals, undermining this national sense of self was to be avoided at all costs. The push for citizenship in various European countries after the Enlightenment, for example, undermined the unity of the Jewish nation by identifying Jews more strongly with their home countries than with their Jewish heritage.⁶⁴ Not only is the nation ideologically valuable, but Ha-am strongly implies that subsuming the nation to other values is impractical. The drive for citizenship was cut short in most countries, leaving Jews persecuted and without the protection of either civil rights or their traditional communities. The elevation of individual profit over collective good in the settlement movement, as noted in *Lo Zeh Haderekh*,

was hampering the ability of the Chovevi Zion to find suitable settlers or to provide for those who had already purchased land.

The failure of citizenship, however, was a boon to the national ideal because the ideal itself had been forged in times of struggle. Ha-am argues that, at the time of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, individual concerns predominated. Following the Temple's destruction though, "the national disaster had strengthened the national feeling, and raised it to such a pitch that individual sorrows vanished before the national trouble."⁶⁵ The national feeling in Ha-am's time is "embodied in the idea of the return to Palestine."⁶⁶ While it was replaced for a time by individual concern, the national ideal is persistent and durable. As the Enlightenment failed to deliver on its promises to Jews, Ha-am saw that the ensuing political difficulties would make space for a rebirth of the national ideal.

In *Past and Future*, Ha-am elaborates on his notion of a national self, both in general terms and in the specific case of the Jewish nation. Much like an individual's sense of self, a national self goes through three stages. First, the childhood of the nation is forward-looking and the desires of the nation are expressed without limit. The nation enters the second stage when existence can be viewed in light of experience, a sort of middle age where looking back makes sense. Finally, the nation grows old and is no longer able to work for its own desires. Unlike an individual who would pass away at this point though, the nation is renewed by the continued sense of belonging from individuals. Thus the national life is cyclical, renewing itself after old age by turning again to the future.

In the case of the Jewish nation, the future has been forgotten, "first through overwhelming troubles, afterwards through excess of prosperity."⁶⁷ In short, the twin boons of Enlightenment and assimilation had caused the nation at large to efface a common goal. While

the improved economic strength of the Jewish people (or at least those in the west) should have been put toward the common purpose, “just at this auspicious time the wise men have set about to uproot the sleeping hope and banish its very name even from the *lips* [italics in original] of the people.”⁶⁸ Clearly, Ha-am held the Jewish authorities responsible for quelling Zionist feeling and the national purpose in the interest of continued prosperity within western European countries.

This situation is easily contrasted with the plight of eastern Jews, who enjoyed none of the advantages of Jews in the West. Ha-am first blames the failure of the national spirit on “overwhelming troubles” though. While the Jews of the West had, to some degree, emerged from the oppression of antisemitism, the Jews of the east still suffered. With the possibility of violent antisemitism constantly at hand, it was no wonder that people would not look toward the collective good but instead toward their individual survival. Ha-am had already elaborated on this argument in *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, so his turn to the “excess of prosperity” here is a sign of his broadening focus beyond a limited audience of Russian Jews to include the West.

The unique circumstances of the Jewish nation, then, distinguish the current movement from other nationalist movements. Ha-am notes that “it is the nation...that desires to live: not some other nation, but just *this* [emphasis in original] one, with all its essentials, and all its memories, and all its hopes.”⁶⁹ Ha-am recognized the persistence of this unique nation, despite its troubles, by arguing, “[i]f this nation could have become another, it would long since have found many ways to its salvation.”⁷⁰ Instead, the “combination of past and future...of memories and impressions with hopes and desires, all closely interwoven, and common to all the individual members of the nation”⁷¹ has kept the Jewish nation separate from other nations, even as individual Jews may have assimilated into other cultures.

In Ha-am's rhetoric, one of the unique strengths of the Jewish nation is its capacity for imitating a strong, foreign, spiritual force. The alternative is assimilation, which is clearly a threat to the national identity. Instead Ha-am argued that Jews were capable of appropriating that foreign spirit for their own purposes. Most communities, upon encountering a foreign economic or military force, would either compete or the weaker community would efface itself by adopting the habits, beliefs, and values of the stronger community. Individual members of the weaker community would protect themselves by assimilating entirely into the stronger, as a sort of imitative entelechy.

Ha-am observed that foreign spiritual forces were different and could be resisted in other ways. In the case of spiritual forces, the "real cause" of assimilation, "is the original self-effacement," so the leaders' "task, therefore, is not to check Imitation, but to abolish self-effacement."⁷² By maintaining a sense of national selfhood through the means of the imposing spirit, the Romans imitated Greek culture, the Russians imitated European culture, and "the Jewish race has persisted in exile, and has not become lost in the nations."⁷³ Recognizing the Jewish success at living among, but distinct within, other nations opened up an important element of Ha-am's vision for a Jewish state.

Ha-am saw the danger of the diaspora in terms of assimilation. Specifically, as different Jewish communities faced different outside influences, they would imitate those influences and grow apart from each other. In this way, French Jews and Russian Jews would have less and less in common over time. This fragmentation was Ha-am's greatest fear for the Jewish nation. The solution, however, was not to decrease the physical fragmentation of the community but to use a Jewish state to manage it. For the first time, Ha-am uses the idea of a common spiritual center to unite all Jews across the political boundaries of the diaspora:

The different sections of the people can be welded together, in spite of their different local characteristics, through the agency of a local centre, which will possess a strong attraction for all of them, not because of some accidental or temporary relation, but by virtue of its own right...Each section will develop its own individuality along lines determined by imitation of its surroundings; but all will find in this centre at once a purifying fire and a connecting link.⁷⁴

Furthermore, Ha-am believed that it was only through this “union and concentration, at least partial, of all [Israel’s] forces”⁷⁵ that such an influential center could be established. In the last Fragment, *Priest and Prophet*, Ha-am contends that the prophecy of “universal dominion of absolute justice” is “the hall-mark of the Hebrew national spirit.”⁷⁶ Rabbinical, or priestly, Judaism had failed to carry this message to the world. Reinforcing the importance Ha-am placed on shared religious history, he argues that the prophets of ancient times “would recognize still more strongly the need of a ‘standard-bearer’ to uphold their universal Idea; and for this reason they would be strengthened in their devotion to their national Idea.”⁷⁷ In other words, the mission of the Jewish people relied on the establishment of the nation. Absent a place from which the Jewish message could go forth, the message would never find an audience.

At this point, Ha-am’s vision exists with all of the major details sketched out. A Jewish state would serve to unite the nation, despite the diaspora, by incorporating the history and culture of all Jews into a common identity that would be distinct among the nations but compatible with citizenship in other countries. Religious and non-religious Jews would be welcome and included, as would Jews escaping from persecution alongside those who simply wanted to labor for the greater good. The Fragments, completed in 1893, were somewhat circumspect in laying out the full ideal of cultural Zionism, but read alongside *Lo Zeh Haderekh*,

they complete the values and goals Ha-am would pursue for the next twenty years. They also marked a distinct project insofar as they were not necessarily rooted in or responding to a specific event.

As complete as Ha-am's vision may have been, it was still limited by the practical concerns of establishing a homeland as quickly as possible. In *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, Ha-am acknowledged that his program of national rebirth would be a slow one, unlikely to see results for some time. The nation that would result from Ha-am's ideology would be a stronger one, but that would be no comfort for the Jews suffering from oppression in Russia. Insofar as Ha-am's program was not especially expedient, it was not popular. The difficulties he identified with the settler movement were undeniable, but his proposed solution remained relatively unpopular. Ha-am's next major work would continue to critically examine the settlement movement but would also signal a change from the abstract to the observational and significantly raise his profile as a commentator on Zionism.

Truth from Eretz Israel

While Ha-am was able to observe the state of the movement from his home in Odessa, his visit to Palestine in 1891 afforded him a fresh perspective on the settlements themselves. Ha-am reported his observations on the settlements in an essay entitled *Truth from Eretz Israel*, originally published serially in *Hamelitz*. Despite his earlier critique of the movement in *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, Ha-am visited the settlements with hope for the project. That hope was dashed in short order, and the reasons are detailed in the essay. Such an account was not destined to be a popular undertaking and, as before, Ha-am acknowledged the impact his message would have. Despite that difficulty, Ha-am "consider[s] it a sacred task to publish the truth."⁷⁸

Two questions guide Ha-am's observations: "Is the land of Israel ready to return to life, and are the children of Israel capable of reviving it?"⁷⁹ The answer to the first question is an unequivocal yes, while the second is more complex. Ha-am finished his trip with "a broken heart and downcast spirit," because he could no longer ignore "the ugliest part" of the settlement movement.⁸⁰ Much of Ha-am's critique here built on the observations he provided in *Lo Zeh Haderekh*. Ha-am earlier accused the movement of understating the difficulties of settling in Palestine, but here he says that the movement is engaged in outright deception. Because the movement did not see sufficient motivation in the nationalist spirit,

they allow themselves to lie "in the name of God," to praise and exalt Eretz Yisrael and its fruits in gross exaggeration, to publish abroad various letters "from there" written by youths or visionaries, or also—dare I say it—by charlatans who overstate the case *deliberately and purposefully*. [emphasis in original]⁸¹

This is a marked change from his tone in *Lo Zeh Haderekh* when the sins of the Chovevi Zion leadership could be excused under the banner of expedience. Now, Ha-am makes no such excuses and sees willful malice in the calls for continued settlement

Ha-am sees that Palestine has become "a new *California*," where all of the settlers know the detailed economics of the viticulture, "that such and such vines cost their owners such and such, that each vine will yield such and such grapes, ...and that the return from all this is such and such percent (a respectable number)?"⁸² All of these claims despite the fact that these people "have never in their lives seen even an image of vines."⁸³ Ha-am found a willful ignorance in the settlements that was replicated in the materials used to recruit new settlers. The example of the grapes is notable. Because Rothschild was planting a particular grape in Rishon Lezion, "the entire nation again gropes in the darkest corners" for the same varietal, despite the simple fact

that wine from that grape had been of poor quality and could not be sold.⁸⁴ There could have been a host of reasons that diminished the wine, but economically “there isn’t a glimmer of anything beyond high hopes.”⁸⁵ The profits described by those promoting settlement were illusory at best and outright lies at worst. Ha-am sharpened his attacks in *Truth from Eretz Israel* because he was more familiar with the reality of settlement and not simply the critical reports from the settlers he was working from previously. Ha-am observed that viticulture in pursuit of profit traded off with subsistence agriculture in such a way that the settlers would be unlikely to feed themselves. The critique concludes, “thus, in all the settlement activities, there appears a kind of stock-exchange speculation; under the banner: Get Rich or Die!”⁸⁶

Grapes and wines are not the end of Ha-am’s complaints about the lies told in the settlements. Beyond the inability of the settlers to cultivate the land, Ha-am noted that they had neglected to engage in even the smallest amount of research into what it would take to be successful. There was, for example, no data on the average yield of the land, recommended crop density, or the correct tools for cultivation. There were no Jews able to read Arabic, and thus no one able to check the validity of land contracts and building permits. More importantly though, Ha-am identified the basic failure of the settlers to build appropriate houses for themselves. Ha-am notes that “almost all the houses in Eretz Yisrael are damp in rainy season and unhealthy, especially to those with respiratory ailments.”⁸⁷ Additionally, this problem had been left out of all of the news from the settlements in an obvious attempt to keep an ugly truth secret. The problem “could be easily remedied by various means in the construction of the houses” according to “expert builders” with whom Ha-am consulted.⁸⁸ That the settlers did not investigate the causes of their own illnesses and adopt simple solutions was further proof of Ha-am’s argument that the settlers themselves were the problem, even as the land was ready for

cultivation. Ha-am expresses astonishment “that our people have not been able or willing to benefit from the experience” of ten years of settlement experience.⁸⁹

Building on his visit to the land itself, Ha-am took the opportunity to set up a new symbolic dichotomy between “Zion” and “Israel” that presaged the later disagreements between Ha-am and Herzl. Ha-am was concerned with Israel, or the people. The health of the people and their peoplehood was preeminent. Individual concerns were judged for how they contributed to the nation’s well-being and sense of itself. Any pursuit which diminished the coherence of the nation, limited the connection that individuals felt to the larger people, or brought harm to the nation was condemned outright. Opposite “Israel,” Ha-am found “Zion,” or the pursuit of the land itself.

Ha-am’s discussion of settlement profiteers is well understood, but his new dichotomy shifts the focus from the rhetoric of the Chovevi Zion that he condemned in *Lo Zeh Haderekh* to a moral judgment against the profiteers themselves. Despite his condemnation of the Chovevi Zion’s tactics, Ha-am excused those tactics as being expedient in light of the historical development of the Jewish community. In *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, Ha-am was either content to merely change the goals of the Chovevi Zion or he was too timid to condemn the men themselves. There are no such half-measures in *Truth from Eretz Israel*. The uncontrolled pursuit of the land is injurious to the coherent sense of nationhood and is castigated without reservation.

Ha-am’s creation of the opposition proceeds in stages. First is his identification of the profit motive behind much of the settlement activity. The various societies, though working “always in the name of ‘Zion’,” do not work together; even the individual delegates within different societies “behave toward each other as if they were there to deprive each other of their livelihood.”⁹⁰ What is missing from the competing activities is “the *spirit* [emphasis in original]

that gathered them hither...without which all their deeds are without form and void, and before which there is absolutely no distinction between members of one society and those of another.”⁹¹

The important work, as Ha-am defined it, was “to work the sacred soil and to serve as the foundation for the construction of the House of Israel.”⁹²

Here Ha-am creates the first separation between Zion and Israel. Zion is sacred, physical, and tangible. Zion is also to serve as the “foundation” of the “House of Israel.” The land alone is not sufficient, but it must be used for a particular purpose in order to reach its full use. The role of the land recalls Ha-am’s discussion of sacred objects in *Sacred and Profane*, whereby an object is sacred because of the purpose to which it is put and retains its consecration into the future. Zion is sacred because it is the historical land that supported the Jewish nation. The nation itself is the prior and more important purpose, however. Ha-am thus distinguishes pursuit of the land from pursuit of the nation.

Settlers of the time were, in Ha-am’s view, poorly suited for the job of founding a new state. Beyond their relative incapacity for agriculture, the settlers were moved into the territories by societies who cared little for their moral qualities. Ha-am notes the moral requirements of settlement six times, almost always pairing it with the material needs for the same activities. There are “general obstacles, material and moral,”⁹³ the “material, moral, and political condition” of eastern Europe will keep Jews there from providing much help,⁹⁴ and relying on winemaking for economic support is “a bad moral commentary on our people.”⁹⁵ More significantly, Ha-am notes that settlement societies “are not too particular about their members’ moral qualities,”⁹⁶ going so far as to posit “a reverse relationship between the necessary material and moral means to work the land.”⁹⁷ Both the material and moral means for settlement are necessary:

The latter—to wit; a love of labor, patience, courage, etc.—in abundance, to equip them to endure and survive for some time in order to achieve their goal; the former—to the minimal degree necessary, considering how many are in the household and how many are working—to keep them from fantasizing about wealth and indulgence.⁹⁸

The focus of so many settlers on profit was not only a persuasive failing of the movement but a moral injury to the nation. Continued chaotic and self-interested settlement activity was plainly a blow to the sense of peoplehood that Ha-am regarded as prior to the success of any political activity. In the case of settlement in a new homeland, such a blow would be fatal, ruining the nation at the time when it was both most likely and most important to find unity. The essay's conclusion leaves no doubt about the opposition between Zion and Israel in Ha-am's thinking. He recounts his visit to the Western Wall in Jerusalem “to pour out his complaint and [his] anger.”⁹⁹ He finds other Jews there, also praying;

And as I stand and look at them and at the wall, and one thought fills all the chambers of my heart: these stones are witness to the destruction of our land, and these men—to the destruction of our people. Which of these two destructions was worse? For which do we shed more tears? Let the *land* be destroyed, and yet the people remains full of life and force—Zerubabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah will arise and the people behind them and the will return and rebuild it. But if the *people* be destroyed, who shall arise and from whence shall come its help?...my lament would not begin with “Zion,” but rather—“Israel.”¹⁰⁰

Here the dichotomy between Zion and Israel is made plain. The land is not as important as the people who settle it. Settling the land with immoral and amoral people will do irreparable damage to the nation as well as the land. Without the health of national ideal, the land is

essentially meaningless. Ha-am's priorities for the nascent Zionist movement were clear, and clearly opposed to the dominant set of priorities.

Ha-am did not differ from the larger movement on the question of priorities alone. In *Truth from Eretz Israel*, Ha-am distinguished himself on the Arab question as well. At this point in the settlement movement, the majority of settlers and supporters saw the local existing Arab population as "desert savages, like donkeys, who neither see nor understand what goes on around them."¹⁰¹ The idea that the Arabs were unaware was conveniently congruent with the sense of the Arab population as a barrier to the settlement movement. If the Arabs were unable to grasp the machinations of real estate around them, they could be easily overcome on the march toward Jewish settlement.¹⁰² Moreover, once Jews owned the land, they would be able to employ Arabs in substandard working conditions without concern that the workers would notice their poor treatment.

Having seen the conditions in the settlements, Ha-am quickly gives the lie to this vision of the Arab population. Referencing the common history of Jews and Muslims, Ha-am contends "[t]he Arab, like all children of Shem, has a sharp intellect and is very cunning."¹⁰³ Ha-am recognizes the developed mercantilists in the cities and the shrewd farmers and landowners who are well-compensated for their labor and property. Beyond being strong businessmen, Ha-am believes the Arabs recognize the long-term implications of the settlement, "but they keep quiet and pretend not to understand since they do not see our present activities as a threat to their future...However, if the time comes when the life of our people...encroach[es] upon the native population, they will not easily yield their place."¹⁰⁴

Similarly, the Turkish overseers of Palestine were not as subject to bribery as was popularly believed. The combination of the Turks' "love of lucre" and European support was

expected to yield success with the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁵ Ha-am observed that the Ottoman Turks were “patriots and great devotees to their own religion and government, and, in questions that involve the honor of either of these, they do their duty faithfully and no amount of money will change that.”¹⁰⁶ In short, Ha-am noted a collective interest among the Arab population that was largely absent in other Zionist thinking.

Ha-am’s vision of the Arab population and their resistance to settlement were, as noted previously, unique in the early Zionist movement. The Arabs were not addressed as a serious impediment until 1907, sixteen years after Ha-am recognized them as such.¹⁰⁷ In light of the inability of settlers to understand land contracts written in Arabic, the dominant opinion of the Arabs as oblivious seems remarkably short-sighted. If anything, the settlers were the oblivious parties, and the assumed incompetence of their bargaining partners is further evidence of their general ignorance. The presumption of superiority led settlers to act without due caution. Ha-am saw the news of new émigrés not only pushing the price of land higher, but also attracting the attention of the authorities. Ha-am relays the story of the purchase of a large plot of land by the Franciscan order near northern Jewish colonies. Despite Jews passing through the property looking for land, “not one of us knew anything about its purchase.”¹⁰⁸ Compared to the settlers, the Franciscans operated with relative quiet and discretion. The public nature of the Jewish immigration would attract unwanted attention from the authorities, leading to the prediction that, “we should not be at all surprised...if the Turkish government does not again begin putting obstacles in our path.”¹⁰⁹

The visibility of the settlement activity was a mistake that the Jews could have avoided by learning from history. Ha-am notes that if there is any lesson to be taken from Jewish history, it is “how careful we must be to not arouse the anger of other people against ourselves by

reprehensible conduct.”¹¹⁰ Such conduct was also found in the settlers’ treatment of Arabs, including “walk[ing] with the Arabs in hostility and cruelty...shamefully beating them for no reason, and even bragging about what they do.”¹¹¹ As settlers suddenly “find themselves with unlimited freedom...there is no one to stand in the breach and call a halt to this dangerous and despicable impulse.”¹¹² Continued conspicuousness and malevolence was likely to hasten Arab resistance to Jewish settlement, delaying or ending any hope of a Jewish state in Palestine given that the Arabs are “unrivaled in ‘taking vengeance and bearing a grudge’.”¹¹³

While Ha-am’s vision of the Arabs as a people was advanced well beyond its time, it is also worth noting that it was not particularly progressive by either contemporary or modern standards. Dowty notes that Ha-am still saw the Arabs as an obstacle, but not as a partner or as a population that needed to be respected and accommodated.¹¹⁴ By including the Arabs in his rhetoric, Ha-am took a major step forward, and his advocacy for humane treatment was also laudable, but there was no real place for the Arab population in his envisioned state. Ha-am was perfectly happy to displace the Arabs, albeit at a more measured pace. A slow, deliberate settlement effort might inspire resistance as well, but if “in the course of time, jealousy might cause hatred, this is nothing. Because by that time our brothers would be able to secure their position in Eretz Yisrael by their large number, their extensive and rich holdings, their unity, and their exemplary way of life.”¹¹⁵ In short, Arabs would not be accommodated in the new Jewish state, but simply held off until the Jewish presence would be too large to resist. The “exemplary way of life” would win out over the presumably inferior existence of the Arabs. Ha-am’s prescience on the Arab question in the Jewish state is tempered by the same arrogance his contemporaries showed for the existing populations.

The other implication of viewing the Arabs as an obstacle to be overcome is evident in Ha-am's call to recognize that the settlement effort was "a massive war and that such war requires extensive preparations."¹¹⁶ In the fashion that would help create the either/or attitude of Jewish and Arab occupation of the land, Ha-am was preparing for all-out conflict against the native population. Military metaphors are infrequent at best in Ha-am's writing at this point, so his call to "clear and detailed knowledge of the condition and features of the battlefield...good weapons...skilled leaders, suitably trained, who will go before the populace" seems discordant.¹¹⁷ The metaphor is somewhat measured with the emphasis Ha-am places on leadership, but the contrast is still bracing.

The key weapon in the war is strong leadership, which follows naturally from Ha-am's claim that the movement is disorganized. Ha-am calls for strong leadership repeatedly, as though such leaders were either waiting in the wings or already issuing orders that were going unheeded. In settlement, "[e]very step needs to be measured and carried out with sober and considered judgment, under the direction of the nation's statesmen and leaders;"¹¹⁸ skilled leaders are required "above all...no one will defy them."¹¹⁹ The current leaders seemed to be unfit for the task since "every intellectual (and, often, true lunatic) sees himself as a miniature Messiah and jumps in front to redeem Israel."¹²⁰ The Executive Committee in Jaffa routinely ignored questions they did not have enough information to answer, and the failure to unite settlement efforts "instead of finding a complete and lasting answer to *the Jewish question*, will only add *the question of the Jews* where it did not previously exist."¹²¹ A controlling hand is the key to Ha-am's solution. Leaders would be well-trained, command the respect of the masses and the societies, and would operate more or less as benevolent dictators, maintaining colonies and selling land to those who are deemed morally fit to work it.

Ha-am outlines a fairly detailed plan for organizing the settlement corporation and managing its business, but then demurs from leadership, saying the corporation “would find people more prominent and more qualified than [him]self to draw up its specific regulations.”¹²² Despite disclaiming any aspiration to political power, Ha-am’s model for leadership was remarkably close to that which he exemplified in the Bnei Moshe. As a “corps d’elite” within the movement, Bnei Moshe would operate in secrecy, guided by the deliberate and cerebral Ha-am, in order to shape the future of the Chovevi Zion. While operating overtly, Ha-am’s vision of Zionist leadership was similar, calling on distant leaders to make decisions without needing to appeal to the *vox populi*. The leaders would also be able to frankly address unpleasant realities about settlement in order to work through them for the good of the movement. Otherwise, the movement would remain mired in the ignorance and subsequent ill-preparedness of the newly-arrived settlers.

The incompetence of the existing leadership led Ha-am to look elsewhere for candidates. The most fruitful places to search, he argued, were western Europe and the United States, though for very different reasons. Ha-am turned to the West because of increasing activity on the issue of settlement. England seemed particularly important because of reports of “some outstanding figures who are natives of Eretz Israel,” and thus familiar with the land while also “accustomed to an ordered life and who know what modernity is” because of their English homes.¹²³ Again the presumed superiority of European culture over that of Palestine is evident, but Ha-am clearly saw the organizational wherewithal in British activists that was absent in Russia and the East. Herzl would later take advantage of western Jews’ capacity for organized action, though Ha-am recognized it well in advance.

The United States played a different role in Ha-am's solution. While Palestine could not absorb a mass immigration with its undeveloped economy, the United States could absorb the immigrants and offer the chance at economic comfort, but not provide them with a gathering point and the land necessary to establishing a new national center. When it came to the question of settlement then, "[t]he true answer, therefore, is: to America *and* to Eretz Israel."¹²⁴ Ha-am's answer looks oddly similar to the modern relationship between Israel and the United States; "the economic side of the Jewish question needs to be answered in America, while the idealistic side...--if this need has any hope of being fulfilled, it is only in Eretz Israel."¹²⁵ Thus Israel would be the symbolic home of the Jewish people, drawing economic (and presumably, political) support from Jews in the United States. In this argument, Ha-am clearly endorses the persistence of the diaspora, even after the creation of a Jewish state. The Jewish populations in western Europe and America were crucial to Ha-am's vision of the Jewish state, but for their support, not necessarily their emigration.

Truth from Eretz Israel was a landmark moment in Ha-am's career and represented the future of Zionist thought in many ways. In its time though, it was a scathing indictment of the settlement movement, even if the alternative would be incredibly difficult to implement. Ha-am's conception of the nation, the national good, and the failings of the movement to enhance either were consistent with his other writings while his observations of the conditions on the ground lent authority to the program he was advocating.

Conclusion

In the first period of Ahad Ha-am's writing, he created a coherent ideology that would come to be known as cultural Zionism, though not until there was some other form of Zionism against which it could be compared. In its own time, Ha-am's advocacy primarily operated as a

critique of the existing practices of the Chovevi Zion. Consistent themes emerge though: the primacy of spirit and morality over the material, the collective and national good over individual benefit, and a nationhood that is as expansive as possible across religious and political boundaries. Consistent exigencies emerge as well: the unpreparedness of the settlers and their sponsors, the misplaced rhetoric of personal profit, and the inability of settlers to overcome a resistant local population.

From these themes and exigencies, Ha-am articulates a vision for a Jewish nation that is distinct, but also like every other nation. While the *Fragments* demonstrate how the principles of nationhood apply to all nations in the same measure, *Truth from Eretz Israel* shows that the specific Jewish project faced unique problems. The historical progression of an idea may work for the French just as well as the Jews, but the French have land which has already been sanctified by its “French-ness,” land which is not occupied by someone else, and a physical home which is not only the home of all that is French, but can be defended as such. The diaspora condition of the Jewish nation presented unique difficulties and, by ignoring those in a plot to simply buy and cultivate land, the settlement movement was doomed.

In many ways, Ha-am separated himself from the Zionist movement that would develop by addressing issues other thinkers ignored and argued in absurd ways. By seeing the Arab population of Palestine as a force which had some measure of collective interest, if not identity, Ha-am could have opened the door to a more frank discussion of the Zionists’ treatment of and negotiation with Arab representatives. Similarly, his recognition that not all Jews would gather into a new state and that the diaspora could provide solutions to some of the state’s problems was not unique, but it was distinctive. Nonetheless, later Zionist rhetors would insist that the diaspora itself was to blame for the condition of the Jewish nation and push Jews from all political

cultures to uproot themselves for a speculative new existence. Why were Ha-am's warnings not heeded?

Two major factors contribute to the movement's refusal to adjust its strategy in response to Ha-am's early writings. The first is Ha-am's adoption of a prophetic ethos. The recording of prophecy in history, as opposed to prophecy as an exclusively performative act, necessitated the development of a prophetic ethos.¹²⁶ Thus the prophetic ethos is simultaneously an embodied performance but also a strategy cultivated and executed rhetorically. The prophet must be a reluctant messenger, burdened by the truth that he or she brings to the nation.¹²⁷ The prophet's persona is a dominant *topos* of invention, so that who the prophet is comes to matter at least as much as what the prophet says, which gives the prophet's testimony additional importance.¹²⁸ Clearly Ha-am fits into this ethos as he confronts the inertia of the movement as an internal force while recognizing that Zionism is necessary to protect the Jewish nation from outside forces of assimilation and oppression. Ha-am also establishes his individual credibility through the observation and testimony to facts on the ground and his personal familiarity with Western learning. Ha-am also prefaces his critiques with an acknowledgement that his comments will be unpopular and that they are likely to inspire significant opposition. The truth that he personally and uniquely possessed was a burden because he had to publicize what he knew, and Ha-am knew that he would suffer for doing so. The personal failure that attends the revelation of unpleasant truths further marked Ha-am's prophetic persona.¹²⁹

Beyond the adoption of a persona that would ensure practical failure, the particulars of Ha-am's ideology made the prophetic tone especially problematic. Specifically, Ha-am's failure to embrace the divine hindered his appeal to a largely religious audience. Importantly, the absence of the divine does not preclude Ha-am's appeal to a prophetic ethos. Darsey points to the

existence of a prophetic rhetoric in the absence of God providing some other transcendent ideal takes the place of the deity.¹³⁰ From a generic point of view, secular ideals can be appropriate authorities for prophetic rhetoric.¹³¹ Within the Zionist movement, Kiewe points to Herzl as a prophet despite Herzl's even more explicit evasion of divine authority.¹³² At the same time, Ha-am clearly conceived of himself in prophetic terms. In *Priest and Prophet*, Ha-am describes the uncompromising prophet in complimentary terms, ultimately identifying prophecy itself as "the hall-mark of the Hebrew national spirit," which he sought to revive.¹³³ Zipperstein notes that "Ha-am had closely aligned himself with prophetic politics," particularly in contrast to the practical work of settlement.¹³⁴ Nonetheless, the absence of the divine was a key failing in Ha-am's prophetic construction.

Darsey notes that the divine can fall away only when the grand narrative of the audience is fragmented, under the "signs of a dissolution of consensus."¹³⁵ For an audience constructed largely on the basis of a shared religious faith, the narrative had not unraveled and, indeed, the divine remained a unifying factor. Ha-am's failure to appeal to the divine while facing a religiously-identified audience may have been consistent with his ideology, but it was a singular failing of his rhetoric. As many pains as Ha-am took to show respect for and deference to the sacred symbols of the community, the absence of authority that would activate those symbols for his audience ensured that his prophetic voice would remain unheeded.

A second factor behind Ha-am's practical failings was the simple fragmentation of the movement. As often as Ha-am pointed to societies working at cross purposes with each other and individuals concerned only with their personal benefit, the very elements he criticized in the settlements would prevent any comprehensive solution from working. Without a steering committee of some sort to mediate squabbles and to adjust tactics for the achievement of the

common purpose there was no effective audience to whom Ha-am could address his arguments. Ben Gurion famously observed that for every two Jews, there are three opinions.¹³⁶ In a fragmented audience, Ha-am could hope for little more than attracting followers given that the people who would have to implement change were the same ones he was criticizing as misguided and selfish. The next period would see a change in the movement as efforts coalesced around Herzl's World Zionist Congress, but for the time being, Ha-am remained a sharp voice of unwelcome criticism.

Chapter Three: Zionism Take Hold: Ha-am and Herzl

The Zionist movement changed dramatically in February 1896, though the catalyst for that change was unlikely. Eight months after first putting his pen to paper to express his thoughts on a Jewish state, Theodor Herzl published *der Judenstaat* in Vienna. The three thousand copies that made up the initial run of Herzl's pamphlet would signal a complete remaking of the movement. In the wake of *der Judenstaat*, Herzl undertook years of "feverish, superhuman activity" on behalf of the movement.¹ By the time of his premature death in 1904, Herzl had created the World Zionist Congress to represent and direct the movement internationally, developed diplomatic contacts that would serve the movement for decades, and revived Zionism as widespread public concern.² The structures that Herzl created eventually laid the path for the state of Israel, and Herzl is now revered as the "principal architect" of the Jewish state.³ The eight years of Herzl's Zionist activity were not without controversy though, and much of that controversy was spurred by Ahad Ha-am's response to the new political Zionism Herzl embodied. Ha-am's second period of public advocacy was focused almost entirely on his conflict with Herzl's ascendant Zionist ideology. In this chapter, I focus on two major works that bookend the period, *The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem* and *Pinsker and Political Zionism*, while drawing on a handful of other representative works to trace Ha-am's rhetorical development from 1896 to 1904.

The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem

The publication of *der Judenstaat* was not, on its own, a major Zionist event. Until 1895, Herzl had not been known as a Zionist of any fervency or conviction. As a writer for *Neue Freie Presse*, Herzl had established himself as a journalist and feuilletonist, but had no reputation in more politically engaged circles.⁴ Thus, it was not the publication of *der Judenstaat* alone that

would create Herzl's reputation as a Zionist, but the organizational work he undertook to support his new passion. *Der Judenstaat* demonstrated Herzl's newfound, and thus relatively immature, sense of Zionism. Anti-Zionist critics were predictably opposed to the work, but so were many of those who were already engaged in the movement. This group was skeptical because Herzl failed to mention the existing Jewish colonies in Palestine or the prior activities of the Chovevi Zion and his analysis of antisemitism was utterly unoriginal.⁵

Herzl proposed two organizations to promote the work of Zionism. One would be the "Jewish Company," set to deal with the economic concerns of the new state and its immigrants. The other would be the "Society of Jews," tasked with all but property rights, what Herzl called the "moral" corporation of the movement.⁶ In 1897, with the First World Zionist Congress, Herzl created the Society that would be primarily responsible for promoting Zionism to Jewish and non-Jewish audiences alike.⁷ The Congress met for three days at the end of August, concluding a dramatic reemergence of the Zionist cause. Well attended by notable Jewish representatives from both western and eastern Europe, the Congress sparked debate and attracted publicity from Jewish and non-Jewish sources all over the world. Unlike the previous meetings of the Chovevi Zion, Herzl's Congress could convincingly claim to have elevated the profile of Zionism in world affairs.⁸

Ahad Ha-am was among those in attendance in Basel for the Congress, though his invitation was itself a source of conflict. In calling the Congress, Herzl had focused his attention on Jewish leaders in the West, assuming that eastern Jews would naturally join the cause. The lack of a response from the Chovevi Zion eventually worried Herzl enough that he began to make personal contacts to invite prominent Russian Jews. Herzl took two more months before he finally invited Ha-am directly, little more than a month before the Congress' convening.⁹ At the

same time that Herzl wrote his invitation, Ha-am was writing to a friend to explain his silence on the Congress to that point.

Ha-am was concerned that his reputation as a critic of the Chovevi Zion preceded him and that anything he had to say would be seen as too pessimistic. As such, he felt his comments would be better received after the Congress had concluded.¹⁰ Elsewhere, Ha-am expressed little hope for the Congress, except possibly raising the esteem of Zionism in the eyes of the Jewish public. This increased prestige risked creating additional resistance from the Ottoman Turks, so while Ha-am did not actively oppose the Congress, he did not believe it would achieve much good.¹¹ While Ha-am ultimately chose to attend, he did so out of a sense of obligation rather than hope, writing “It is possible I shall be of some small use, for it is painful to see everything put into the hands of young people whose enthusiasm is greater than their understanding.”¹² Surely the youths to whom Ha-am referred were not judged simply by their age, but also their experience.

While at the Congress, Ha-am reported that he felt out of place, “like a mourner at a wedding-feast.”¹³ Herzl proved his inexperience with the movement when he was unable to distinguish Ha-am’s secularist ideology from the conservative religious opponents of nationalist and treated both with a measure of disdain. In two conversations with Herzl, Ha-am confirmed his doubts about the new leader’s diplomatic progress and trustworthiness.¹⁴ Finally leaving Basel, Ha-am was dismayed by the damage he thought the Congress had done to the movement and the supplanting of his program by the sudden prominence of Herzl. Nonetheless, months would pass before Ha-am issued his first public remarks on the new era of Zionism.

The first essay was a short polemic, full of vituperation against the attitudes in evidence at the Congress and the speakers behind those attitudes. *The First Zionist Congress* appeared

several months after the Congress concluded, but it was clear that the sting of the event was still fresh. Ha-am shouted that the “Europeans...expert in the ways of diplomacy...kindled the false fire of a feverish enthusiasm, which brought to the Basle Congress a rabble of youngsters—in years or in understanding—and their senseless proceedings robbed it of its bloom and made it a mockery.”¹⁵ Ha-am unfavorably compared the Congress with a meeting of the Chovevi Zion in 1890 that also created unrealistic expectations. The same men gathered in Basel as they had gathered in Jaffa “as though they had completely forgotten that the responsibility for what has happened to the colonisation work lies not on the work itself, but on them, because they carried it on by crooked methods and turned it from its true purpose, in order to create a great popular movement at a single stroke.”¹⁶ Recalling his critique from *Truth from Eretz Yisrael*, Ha-am argued that the same men who ran the movement aground before should not be trusted to take the helm of the movement a second time.

In some ways, *The First Zionist Congress* was a very personal response that flowed directly from the disrespect Ha-am felt from Herzl before and during the Congress. Herzl is not mentioned by name, but is clearly included among the “rabble” and “Europeans” Ha-am held responsible for the consequences. Ha-am saw the formation of the Congress as an abandonment of the work by the Chovevi Zion, however flawed it may have been. The references to earlier meetings of the Chovevi Zion, “or, as they now call it, ‘Zionism’” are tinged with an angry bitterness.¹⁷ Ha-am notes that he had earlier “ventured to tell the public the bitter truth” in a sort of warning that his earlier critique went unheeded.¹⁸ Even Ha-am’s role as a commentator on the movement had been largely supplanted in Basel, and *The First Zionist Congress* was an uncharacteristically emotional reaction to the shift.

Ha-am is not entirely critical of the Congress, however. He noted approvingly that “the *national* [italics in original] answer to the ‘Jewish problem’ came out of its retirement into the light of day, and was proclaimed to the world in ringing tones, in clear language, and in a manly fashion—a thing the like of which had never happened since the Jews were exiled from their land.”¹⁹ By making clear that a Jewish nation persisted in exile, the Congress “would have deserved eternal commemoration in letters of gold.”²⁰ There was the memory of “the great and sacred hour when they all—all these down-trodden Jews who came from the ends of the earth—stood up together like brothers.”²¹ Unfortunately, in Ha-am’s estimation, the Congress was overtaken by “impatience, that curse which dogs us and ruins all that we do.”²²

Ha-am would have preferred to see the Congress restricted to “what words and enthusiasm could do,” even though it would have reduced the business to a single day, “but that one day would have been worth whole generations.”²³ The promises of the Congress were too grand to have been met in three days, and Ha-am feared that those promises obligated the delegates to report great progress when they returned home. The lack of actual progress, meanwhile, would undermine the movement in the long term. Ha-am’s view of political Zionism was clear in the epigrammatic closing of the essay: “The salvation of Israel will be achieved by *Prophets*, not by *diplomats*...”²⁴ Given Ha-am’s earlier valorization of the prophet persona and his polemic in this essay, he clearly saw himself in the former camp and as one who should be central to the Zionist movement going forward.

Ha-am’s comments were not entirely original. In fact, the essay mirrored criticisms of Herzl that had been circulating among the Russian delegates to the Congress already. Ha-am’s amplification of those familiar criticisms in an attempt to undermine the credibility of the conference made his reactions uniquely threatening.²⁵ The reactions to Ha-am’s essay were

almost uniformly negative. While he had been isolated to a degree by his earlier works, *The First Zionist Congress* served only to add to Ha-am's marginalization as a Zionist thinker.²⁶ As the Congress itself had rendered Ha-am's little organizational work moot, his reactions to it pushed him to the sidelines as well.

In an attempt to blunt the criticism he faced from *The First Zionist Congress*, Ha-am wrote a major essay expanding on his criticisms of Herzl and political Zionism. *The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem* shows little of Ha-am's first emotional reaction to the Congress, but turns to address political Zionism programmatically, and Herzl specifically as the icon of the movement. Ha-am acknowledges his critics, and recognizes that his tone may have been a mistake. Ha-am "let slip some hard expressions, which [he] now regret[s], because it is not [his] habit to use such expressions."²⁷ The tone aside, Ha-am did not back down from the substance of his argument as the intervening time "has not convinced me that I was wrong; on the contrary, it has strengthened my conviction that though I wrote in anger, I did not write in error."²⁸ Instead, the brevity he intended in the earlier essay may have "left room for the ascription to me of ideas and opinions which are utterly remote from my true intention."²⁹

The bulk of the essay is obviously Ha-am's justification for his opposition to the rising tide of political Zionism. Unlike *The First Zionist Congress*, Ha-am takes a much more systematic approach to his opposition while also adding detail to his earlier criticism. Much of the essay is focused on the differences between the new Zionist movement and the foregoing Chovevi Zion. Ha'am notes that the change of name from "Love of Zion" to "Zionism" indicates "to all and sundry that they are not talking about anything so antiquated as *Chibbath Zion*, but about a new, up-to-date movement, which comes, like its name, from the West."³⁰ The rhetorical construction of West and East takes on new significance for Ha-am here. Earlier Ha-am had

envisioned Jews of the West and Jews of the East as facing different problems that might be resolved under the banner of a common solution. Now, even the solution presented a division. With more than a trace of sarcasm, Ha-am asks, “can ‘they’—the Jews of the West—fail to carry out anything that they plan?”³¹ The promises “they” made have undermined the work of settlement through the prospect of immanent success. With a state, “The Messiah,” as Ha-am derides the prospect, so close, there is no more apparent value in settlement or education.³²

The takeover of the movement by Western Jews also meant the devaluation of Hebrew. While the old name (Chovevi Zion) of the movement was Hebrew, the new name (Zionism) is intentionally and consciously not. Ha-am notes an even more European title (Zionismus) further distances the movement from a Hebrew vernacular. In the wake of the meeting, Ha-am sees the Congress producing press coverage in Jewish and non-Jewish papers, pamphlets in various languages, and the continuing coverage by *Die Welt*, the German-language Zionist newspaper founded by Herzl himself. The media attention is not complete however, because “one small nation’s language has thus far not been honoured with such attention, though its journals too have lavished praise on the Congress: I mean Hebrew.”³³ The intrinsic link between language and culture was missing from the Zionist publicity, and Ha-am saw that as a sign of the cultural barrenness of the new iteration of the movement.

The name of the movement became a nexus for Ha-am’s critique. Even as he had criticized the settlement activity of the Chovevi Zion earlier, Ha-am took up the banner of the Chovevi Zion as an alternative to “Zionism.” The conflict was one between “Western ‘Zionism’ and Eastern *Chibbath Zion*.”³⁴ The Chovevi Zion had already dealt with the issues that Zionism would soon face, and the example of the Chovevi Zion should have been, in Ha-am’s argument, a lesson for the Zionists. At the time of the Congress, however, the Chovevi Zion,

no less than “Zionism,” wants a Jewish State and believes in the possibility of the establishment of a Jewish State in the future. But while “Zionism” looks to the Jewish State to provide a remedy for poverty, complete tranquility and national glory, *Chibbath Zion* knows that our State will not give us all these things until “universal Righteousness is enthroned and holds sway over nations and States...” “Zionism,” therefore, begins its work with political propaganda; *Chibbath Zion* begins with national culture.”³⁵

Despite his earlier conflicts with the leadership of the Chovevi Zion, in light of the First Zionist Congress, Ha-am allied himself with their label. Nonetheless, Herzl’s organization had undermined the strength of an independent Chovevi Zion movement.

With Herzl’s activity, the center of the movement shifted from East to West, and with that shift came a reprioritization of the problems faced by world Jewry. Jews in the East faced direct political persecution and sometimes physical danger because of their status as Jews. Jews in the West were unable to enter into the fullness of civil society, but they were not generally under political threat and enjoyed relative economic freedom. Ha-am outlines the differing difficulties while praising the opening speech of the Congress from Max Nordau. While Nordau’s speech did not address the solution to the problem, Ha-am notes its place at the beginning of the Congress meant “that in order to escape from all these troubles, it is necessary to establish a Jewish State.”³⁶ The Congress itself served as the declaration of the solution, so Ha-am couches his first criticism in terms of the practicality of that solution.

Ha-am opens his practical criticism by assuming that all of the necessary diplomatic work has been completed and the consent of all the necessary nations has been obtained. In that case, “every poor Jew will be at perfect liberty to go to his State and to seek his living there...But

liberty to *seek* a livelihood is not enough: he must be able to find what he seeks.”³⁷ Ha-am’s concern here is blatantly economic; simply because a Jewish state would exist does not mean that such a state would be able to support all of the Jews who might desire to live there, even under the best political conditions. Ha-am specifically pointed to the forces of economic globalization to highlight the burden a new state would shoulder, given that “the single country is no longer an economic unit: the whole world is one great market, in which every State has to struggle hard for its place.”³⁸ The economic problems that Ha-am predicted for the new state would result in immigrants “flying from the most deadly of all enemies...from hunger.”³⁹ The inability of the state to support mass immigration would mean “the Jews will be able to settle in it only little by little.”⁴⁰ During the Congress, Herzl had argued for the superiority of his program over gradual colonization by calculating the latter method would take nine hundred years to settle all of the world’s Jews in Palestine. Given the difficulties of absorbing a mass of immigrants, Ha-am was unpersuaded by Herzl’s argument, instead noting that “the Jewish State itself, do what it will, cannot make a more favorable calculation...We must confess to ourselves that the ‘ingathering of the exiles’ is unattainable by natural means.”⁴¹

The question then is how Herzl’s Jewish state is going to relieve the material suffering of the Jews who remain in the diaspora. Ha-am points to Herzl’s argument that the existence of a Jewish state will itself be sufficient to convince other governments to protect their Jewish residents. The argument is “so fantastic that [Ha-am] see[s] no need to waste words in demolishing it.”⁴² In fact, Ha-am turns Herzl’s argument back on itself under the assumption that a Jewish state will relieve other governments from the obligation to care for their Jewish residents since they “will be able to plead that if the Jews are not happy where they are, they can go to their own State.”⁴³ Thus the remaining material justification for Herzl’s vision was

rendered invalid. Herzl's state could not provide for all of the Jews in the world if they were within its borders and it certainly could not advocate for those that would remain outside.

What remained therefore was the moral problem. Here again, the East and West faced very different moral problems. In the West, the problem was that of assimilation. Under the banner of the Enlightenment, Western Jews left the ghetto and were "unhappy because [the] hope of an open-armed welcome is disappointed."⁴⁴ Upon returning to the Jewish community, "cultural work has no attraction, because Jewish culture has played no part in [their] education and is a closed book."⁴⁵ For the Jews of the West then, the political work on behalf of the Jewish state was an existential relief. The World Zionist Congress presented "an opportunity for organized work, for political excitement...without having to become subservient to non-Jews."⁴⁶ Importantly, the "pursuit alone is sufficient to cure him [the Western Jew] of his moral sickness, which is the consciousness of inferiority."⁴⁷ The mere identification of a goal and action in that general direction was enough for the failed-assimilationist, such that "thanks to this ideal he stands once more spiritually erect, and has regained human dignity, without overmuch trouble and without external aid."⁴⁸

In this light, the nascent Zionist movement in the West was relatively harmless, even if it was unlikely to achieve any meaningful results. In the East, however, Ha-am claimed that the movement had advanced beyond the stage the Western Jews then occupied. Eastern Jews now faced a different sort of moral trouble:

In the West, it is the problem of the Jews, in the East, the problem of Judaism.

The one weighs on the individual, the other on the nation. The one is felt by Jews who have had a European education, the other by Jews whose education has been Jewish. The one is a product of anti-Semitism, and is dependent on anti-Semitism

for its existence; the other is a natural product of a real link with a culture of thousands of years, which will retain its hold even if the troubles of the Jews all over the world come to an end, together with anti-Semitism, and all the Jews in every land have comfortable positions, are on the best possible terms with their neighbours, and are allowed by them to take part in every sphere of social and political life on terms of absolute equality.⁴⁹

In other words, solving the material and political problems of western Judaism would not solve the moral problem of the eastern Jews.

The globalizing forces of the age had dictated that “not only Jews,” had left the isolation of the ghetto, but “Judaism has come out, too.”⁵⁰ Ha-am cites his own essay *Imitation and Assimilation* to argue that the Jewish spirit “wants to absorb those elements of general culture which reach it from the outside, to digest them and make them a part of itself.”⁵¹ The diaspora made it impossible for a distinctly Jewish culture to evolve though since, “[i]n our time culture wears in each country the garb of the national spirit, and the stranger who would woo her must sink his individuality and become absorbed in the dominant spirit.”⁵² Moving from the ghetto to the broader context of a non-Jewish nation meant that Judaism was “in danger of losing its essential being.”⁵³ Moreover, since Jews emerged from the ghetto into a variety of nations, Judaism was “in danger of being split up into as many kinds of Judaism, each with a different character and life, as there are countries of the Jewish dispersion.”⁵⁴ In light of these difficulties, Ha-am argued that the diaspora alone was no longer adequate for the Jewish national development, but required a stable center around which a unifying national culture could take shape.

The national development did not even need a state yet in Ha-am's ideology. The state would be a consequence of national development, not a prerequisite for it. Indeed, Ha-am's was a grand vision:

Then from this centre the spirit of Judaism will go forth to the great circumference, to all the communities of the Diaspora, and will breathe new life into them and preserve their unity; and when our national culture in Palestine has attained that level, we may be confident that it will produce men in the country who will be able, on a favourable opportunity, to establish a State which will be a *Jewish State*, and not merely a State of Jews. [ital. in original]⁵⁵

Here is the crux of Ha-am's objections to the political Zionist program. A "state of Jews" would not evince any thoroughgoing Jewishness and thus could not move the Jewish culture forward. In many ways, the setting of culture as the precursor to politics is an extension of the similarities Ha-am drew between the Jewish nation and all other nations in the *Fragments* discussed in the previous chapter. The French state was the political expression of French culture, and thus the state was also the product of the culture. Ha-am could see that the Jewish state would need to develop in the same way to be a viable representative of Judaism to other nations.

Even as he noted the chronological relationship between culture and politics that developed in other nations, Ha-am argued that the significance of culture to the Jewish nation was unique. Again referencing the *Fragments*, Ha-am pointed to Jewish history to reinforce the value of spiritual power over the material. The Jewish respect for spiritual power is why conflict between nations "never brought the Jewish nation, as it did the other nations of antiquity, to the point of self-effacement."⁵⁶ Within the Jewish nation, the spiritual must come first, because

a political ideal *which does not rest on the national* culture is apt to...beget in us a tendency to find the path of glory in the attainment of material power and political dominion, thus breaking the thread that unites us with the past, and undermining our historical basis.⁵⁷

The loss of a political ideal was a worse prospect for Ha-am than never attempting to fulfill it simply because “if the political ideal is not attained, it will have disastrous consequences, because we shall have lost the old basis without finding a new one.”⁵⁸ The cultural destitution of the World Zionist Congress meant that “political Zionism cannot satisfy those Jews who care for Judaism: its growth seems to them to be fraught with danger to the object of their own aspiration.”⁵⁹

From this section, it is clear that Ha-am was not opposed to the idea of a Jewish state. In truth, his ideology saw a thoroughly Jewish state as the consequence of a revived and vital Jewish culture. The absence of a cultural cornerstone for a state, however, would doom it, and the impacts of such a failure would reverberate through the Jewish community for generations. Ha-am differed from the political Zionists in terms of the priority of cultural work, rather than disputing the entirety of their program. While the political Zionists envisioned a limited role for cultural work, appropriate to their limited vision of the necessity of that work, Ha-am saw culture as a necessary prerequisite for political Zionism. The failure of political Zionism in light of a shallow cultural base would doom both the prospects for a Jewish state and the continuing sense of nationhood among the Jews of the Diaspora.

Ha-am’s contention with the World Zionist Congress was that the time was not right for a political solution to the problems of world Jewry, that world Jewry was not yet prepared to take on the task of creating a state. Much as Ha-am argued the settlers sponsored by the Chovevi Zion

were not up to the task, Ha-am believed that “[a]lmost all our great men, those, that is, whose education and social position fit them to be at the head of a Jewish State, are spiritually far removed from Judaism, and have no true conception of its nature and its value.”⁶⁰ Such men were tied to their identities as citizens of other states and “they will endeavour, by moral persuasion or even by force, to implant that culture in the Jewish State, so that in the end the Jewish State will be a State of Germans or Frenchmen of the Jewish race.”⁶¹ The impact of substituting another culture for the Jewish national ideal “would spell death and utter degradation for our people...while we should miss the living moral force within.”⁶²

Ha-am then turns to a detailed rephrasing of parts of his earlier essay on the Congress, and in so doing, crafts a unique response that places a Jewish state in Palestine in a very different position than was assumed by the political Zionists. In *The First Zionist Congress*, Ha-am objected to a solution that would leave the Jews “a small and insignificant nation, with a State tossed about like a ball between its powerful neighbours, and maintaining its existence only by diplomatic shifts and continual trucking to the favoured of fortune.”⁶³ In response, one of Ha-am’s critics had pointed to the existence of small states that existed without the meddling of more powerful countries. In *The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem*, Ha-am identified “the geographical position of Palestine and its religious importance to all nations,” as reasons why “each Power will try to influence [the Jewish state’s] policy in a direction favourable to itself, just as we see happening in the case of other weak states (like Turkey) in which the great European nations have ‘interests.’”⁶⁴ In the divide between East and West, the political Zionists were casting the Jewish state as essentially Western, modeling the state after similarly small European countries. Ha-am took the opposite approach, pulling the Jewish state out of the European model, which would leave the state subject to the same sort of interference that other

non-Western states were then facing. By assigning such an identity to a Jewish state, Ha-am subtly distinguished his vision from that of the political Zionists. The Russians, being openly hostile to Judaism, would not threaten interference in the same way that the Europeans would, given that the fathers of political Zionism hailed from those European states. Ha-am sought a state that would be universally Jewish rather than carry a distinct European influence, as isolating the state from political intrusions would be the only way to protect the culture that would flourish there.

With his unsparing critique of the political Zionist ideology aside, Ha-am then turns to specific attacks on individuals associated with the Congress. Ha-am avers that the task is unpleasant but necessary. In his earlier essay on the Congress, he “contented [him]self with general allusions.”⁶⁵ Those allusions were used against him in the response to the essay and “these tactics constrain [him] here, against [his] will, to raise the artistic veil which they have cast over the whole proceedings, and to mention some details which throw light on the character of this movement and the mental attitude of its adherents.”⁶⁶ First, of course, was Herzl.

During his opening address to the Congress, Herzl paid service to the idea of cultural work, calling Zionism “a return to the Jewish fold even before it becomes a return to the Jewish land.”⁶⁷ Ha-am acknowledged Herzl’s words, but believed they were “so much at variance with his deeds that we are forced to the unpleasant conclusion that they are nothing but a well-turned phrase.”⁶⁸ Specifically, Ha-am took issue with the removal of the questions of culture to the end of the general proceedings, even after the assembly dispensed with the minutiae of the organization. By the time questions of culture came to the floor, “all those present were tired out, and welcomed the setting sun on the last day... Naturally, the discourse, however good, had to be hurried and shortened.”⁶⁹

Ha-am also turned to the official documents of the Congress to make his case. He pointed to a speech that claimed “Western Jews were nearer than those of the East to the goal of Zionism, because they had already done half the work: they had annihilated the Jewish culture of the Ghetto, and were thus emancipated from the yoke of the past.”⁷⁰ That speech had been reprinted in a pamphlet for distribution, which seems like a remarkably short-sighted move for an organization that drew the majority of its rank and file membership from those Eastern countries. *Die Welt*, the German-language newspaper that Herzl founded as the official organ of the World Zionist Congress was always “fixed on the non-Jewish world...aiming simply at finding favour in the eyes of the nations.”⁷¹ *Die Welt* spent its ink praising the non-Jews who praised the movement to such an extent that “the President found it necessary publicly to tender special thanks to the three Gentiles who had honoured the meeting by taking part in it, although they were all three silent members.”⁷²

Ha-am also derided the movement’s “endeavour to imitate, as Jews, the conduct and procedure of the Germans, even where they are most foreign to the Jewish spirit.”⁷³ Specifically, Ha-am was concerned by the “unpleasant incident” during the Congress when “the young ‘Zionists’ went out to spread the gospel of ‘Zionism’ with sticks and fisticuffs, in German fashion.”⁷⁴ Given Ha-am’s argument that respect for the spirit over material or physical force was what distinguished the Jewish nation and enabled it to persist in the face of difficulties, the use of violence in Vienna must have been impossible to tolerate. Thus, when *Die Welt* “regarded this incident sympathetically, and, for all its carefulness, could not conceal its satisfaction at the success of the Zionist fist,” Ha-am was able to further condemn the movement as an abandonment of authentic Jewish culture.⁷⁵

Ha-am finally criticized the Congress for its suppression of differences within the Zionist movement. The Congress sought to showcase a united Jewish people and “from beginning to end they [the organizers] pursued this object with clear consciousness and determination.”⁷⁶ Ha-am detailed the measures the organizer went to in order to ensure maximum participation from nations “preoccupied with material troubles,” who were “not likely on the whole to get enthusiastic about a political ideal for the distant future.”⁷⁷ Ha-am noted that the agenda for the Congress “said merely in general terms that anybody could be a delegate ‘who expresses his agreement with the *general* programme of Zionism,’ without explaining what the general programme was or where it could be found.”⁷⁸ That program was to be Herzl’s and Herzl’s alone, though the organizers “were careful not to announce clearly in advance that Herzl’s Zionism, and that only, would be the basis of the Congress, that the basis would be above criticism, and no delegate to the Congress would have the right to question it.”⁷⁹ During the proceedings, “the heads of the Congress tried with all their might to prevent any difference of opinion on fundamental questions from coming to the surface.”⁸⁰ Even prior to the Congress, the question of the programme came up...and some of the delegates from Vienna pointed to the statement on the Order of Proceedings, and tried to prove from it that that question could not properly be raised, since all of the delegates has accepted the general programme of Zionism, and there was no Zionism but that of Vienna, and *Die Welt* was its prophet.⁸¹

Despite the efforts of the Congress, some of the debate bubbled to the surface and “showed, to the consternation of many people, that there were several kinds of ‘Zionists.’”⁸²

Ha-am ended his response to the Congress by returning to the dichotomy between East and West that opened his critique. Zionism, he argued, was “very good and useful for those

Western Jews who have long since almost forgotten Judaism, and have no link with their people except a vague sentiment which they themselves do not understand.”⁸³ The failures of Zionism might eventually drive some of those Jews away from the movement, but even then Zionism will have been valuable, “because undoubtedly there will be among them men of larger heart, who, in the course of time, will be moved to...understand their people and its spirit: and these men will arrive of themselves at the genuine *Chibbath Zion*.”⁸⁴

For the Jews of the East however, “this ‘political’ tendency can bring us only harm.”⁸⁵ Because the eastern Jews had already accepted the moral and cultural basis for the Jewish nation, embrace of the political would overwhelm the work that had already been done. For the Western Jews who first came to know the movement through political Zionism, it would serve as an entry to the cultural work that Ha-am advocated, even when the political program had failed. For eastern Jews though, the cultural work came first, so when it was left for the political and the political program failed, they would be left with nothing. The failure of the political program was a given for Ha-am; “Those who now abandon that ideal [cultural Zionism] in exchange for the political idea will never return again, not even when the excitement dies down and the State is not established.”⁸⁶

Seeing erstwhile members of the *Chovevi Zion* “suddenly deserting the flag...and bowing the knee to an idea which has no roots in its being, simply because it comes from the West,” left Ha-am in the grip of the “heavy hand of despair.”⁸⁷ It was this despair that drove Ha-am to write his first response to the Congress, and though he “wrote in anger, [he] did not write in error.”⁸⁸ The divide between eastern and western Zionism, between political Zionism and cultural Zionism, between the World Zionist Congress and the Chovevi Zion represented a profoundly new dynamic for the movement and Ha-am’s ideology. While his earlier work had been

dedicated to the efficacy of the settlement movement and the purity of the motivations behind it, the rise of Herzlian Zionism meant that Ha-am had to defend those motivations outright. The mere emergence of the political Zionist movement threw into doubt the assumptions that undergirded Ha-am's approach to Zion. The more existential threat to his ideology pushed Ha-am to a more emotional, vitriolic persona in order to defend himself. For the next several years, Ha-am would find himself in a similarly defensive rhetorical posture.

The Transvaluation of Values/A New Savior/The Spiritual Revival

The rise of Herzl and the World Zionist Congress substantially changed the target of Ha-am's writing so that much of his attention was devoted to the differences between East and West, using those differences to distinguish an authentically Jewish national spirit in the East rather than the assimilated communities of the West. That difference was never drawn in more explicit terms than in Ha-am's 1898 essay *The Transvaluation of Values*. The essay explicitly addressed the growing Jewish embrace of Nietzschean thought. Micah Berdichevsky was a Ukrainian-born but German-educated Jew who studied Nietzsche and Hegel while earning his PhD. Like Ha-am, Berdichevsky saw a break in Jewish history with the emergence from the ghetto, but such a break necessitated a complete rejection of the Jewish tradition.⁸⁹ The new world for Jews would prioritize "a primordial instinct for action, violence, even sexual libertinism."⁹⁰ In the wake of the World Zionist Congress, Berdichevsky's writings on Nietzsche struck a chord with members of the new organization who were seeking some sort of philosophical underpinning for their program.

Ha-am, both as a *maskil* and through the discussions of spiritual force in *Imitation and Assimilation* and *The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem*, had no particular objection to the study and adoption of German philosophy. Ha-am did object to the wholesale, uncritical rush to

Nietzsche, however, because it did not include a direct relation to Jewish ethics. Ha-am described the Jewish Nietzschean ideology in this way:

Judaism has exalted the abstract, spiritual ideal above real, physical force: it has exalted the “book” over the “sword.” By this means it has destroyed in the Jews the striving after individual mastery; it has subordinated the reality of life to its shadow; it has made the Jew a sort of appendage to an abstract moral law. In this condition it is impossible for the Jews to live on among the nations; still more impossible for them to restore their national life in their own country. Now, therefore, that the desire for a national rebirth has been aroused in us, it behooves us first of all to trans-value the moral values which are accepted among us at present; to overthrow, mercilessly and at a single blow, the historic edifice which our ancestors have left us, seeing that it is built up on this dangerously mistaken idea of the superiority of the spirit to matter, and of the subordination of the individual life to abstract moral laws.⁹¹

The Nietzschean ideal concluded that “the moral law is founded on an absolute mistake,”⁹² requiring society to “give back to the idea of good the meaning which it had of old, before ‘Jewish morality’ overthrew Greek and Roman culture.”⁹³ Following Nietzsche would “alter the very foundation of morality, the actual standard by reference to which things are pronounced good or evil.”⁹⁴

The idea of a national rebirth was clearly not at odds with Ha-am’s ideology, but the shape of the Nietzschean alternative certainly was. Ha-am praised the “literary men” who “found a new doctrine, universal in scope...and its attraction for them produced a desire to propound a similar new doctrine, of special application to the Jews.”⁹⁵ Previous examples of the Jewish

community adopting foreign ideas had made the community richer and more vibrant. The Zionist interpretation of Nietzsche, however, was not “a home product, nor did it spring into being in response to the demands of our own life.”⁹⁶ In this case, Ha-am cautioned that the “artist should understand the possibilities of his material, and know how to subdue it to the form. He must not be mastered by his material, and let it turn under his hands into a useless piece of ware.”⁹⁷

Ha-am separated Nietzsche’s philosophy into two distinct elements. First was the “human element” that consisted of “the raising of the human type in its highest manifestations above the general level.”⁹⁸ Finding an ideal type and raising it up as the general goal of society was, to Ha-am’s thinking, a universal goal. Each society should engage in such conscious improvement. The flaw in Jewish Nietzschean thinking was the presumed connection between the human element and the “simply German or Aryan” element.⁹⁹ Since the goal of the Nietzschean ideal was “the mere existence of the Superman, and not his effect on the world, we have no criterion by which to distinguish those human qualities of which the development marks the progress of the type.”¹⁰⁰ The striving to achieve an ideal “cannot be tested by any standard external to itself...It is impossible for them [Jewish Nietzscheans] to define clearly and convincingly the nature of that superior type which they desiderate.”¹⁰¹ Nietzsche’s ideal was physical and beautiful, but his ideal “does not follow by logical necessity from his fundamental postulate...it is the man of Aryan race, who, with his excessive regard for physical power and beauty, depicts his ideal according to his own taste.”¹⁰² Had Nietzsche been Jewish he “might still have changed the moral standard, and made the Superman an end in himself, but would in that case have attributed to his Superman quite different characteristics.”¹⁰³

The Jewish Superman would instead valorize “the expansion of moral power, the subjugation of the bestial instincts, the striving after truth and righteousness in thought and deed,

the eternal warfare against falsehood and wickedness: in a word, that moral ideal which Judaism has impressed on us.”¹⁰⁴ The Jewish, or Hebraic, standard for an ideal type was different than the Aryan, but it could serve as the object of pursuit for a national ideal just as well as the Aryan.

Ha-am even found support for the Hebraic ideal in Nietzsche who

for all his worship of the strong arm and the glory of physical life, regards righteousness as the highest perfection attainable on earth...he finds it a great advantage that righteousness should be embodied in fixed abstract laws, which enable a man to test the justice of his actions in relation to the objective rule.¹⁰⁵

The Aryan standard was not intrinsic to Nietzsche’s philosophy, so replacing it with the Jewish model would represent the sort of appropriation of foreign ideas that Ha-am endorsed as a product of learning and connection with the wider world. As Ha-am described in *Imitation and Assimilation* however, adopting foreign ideas without any adaptation to the specific circumstances of Jewish culture would lead to the effacement of Judaism, the weakening of the nation, and its eventual defeat. Adopting a Nietzschean ideal would have been impossible for the Jews because “you cannot manufacture a new moral code for a nation any more than you can manufacture it a new language. The laws of morality, like those of language, are an outcome of the national character; they are a fruit which ripens little by little through the ages.”¹⁰⁶

The value of Nietzsche’s philosophy was not enough to efface Judaism, in Ha-am’s estimation. In fact, once the Hebraic ideal was substituted for the Aryan, “those who are at all expert in this matter do not need to be told that there is no necessity now for the creation of a Jewish Nietzscheism of this kind, because it has existed for centuries.”¹⁰⁷ Reflecting his discussion from *Justice and Mercy*, Ha-am reminded his audience that “Judaism has never based itself on mercy alone, and has never made its Superman subordinate to the mass of men.”¹⁰⁸ The

Jewish Superman was “the Zaddik, the ‘righteous man’...’the whole world was only created for his sake,’ and that he is an end for himself.”¹⁰⁹ Ha-am excused Nietzsche “as a German...for having failed to understand Judaism and having confused it with another doctrine which sprang out of it and went off on another track,” but the Jewish adopters of Nietzschean thought should have known better.¹¹⁰ The “young writers” Ha-am attacked had “neglected what is essentially original in [Nietzsche], and have seized only on the new phrase and the Aryan element.”¹¹¹ That element was “not the emancipation of the superior type from its subservience to the multitude,” which Ha-am clearly felt could be justified, but “the emancipation of physical life from its subservience to the limiting power of the spirit.” If there were any doubt remaining, Ha-am pronounced that “[s]uch a point of view as this can never ally itself with Judaism.”¹¹²

Even as Ha-am showed Nietzsche to be poorly suited to the Jewish ideal, he demonstrated a familiarity with Nietzsche and turned the German’s ideology toward the purpose of cultural Zionism. Citing Nietzsche, Ha-am noted that there had been little deliberate effort put toward creating the Superman. Ha-am then argues that “even the soul of the Superman is a product of society, and cannot wholly free itself from the moral atmosphere in which it has grown and developed.”¹¹³ Assuming the goal of society is the Superman and the Superman is a product of society, then, according to Ha-am’s interpretation, “an essential condition of the attainment of this goal is the *Supernation*: that is to say, there must be a single nation better adapted than other nations...to moral development, and ordering its whole life in accordance with a moral law.”[emphasis in original]¹¹⁴ Naturally, Ha-am suggested that the Jewish nation was better prepared to fulfill that role than any other. Turning to Nietzsche himself again, Ha-am noted that “it is almost universally admitted that the Jews have a genius for morality, and in this respect are superior to all other nations.”¹¹⁵ The Jewish superiority did not come from force or

numbers, but from the duty “to give concrete expression in every generation to the highest type of morality, to submit always to the yoke of the most exacting moral obligations, and this without any regard to the gain or loss of the rest of mankind, but solely for the sake of the existence of this supreme type.”¹¹⁶ The unique Jewish embrace of moral obligation, and the lessening of such obligations for non-Jews, was evidence of the nation’s fit to the Nietzschean ideal because the superior type “will not consent to lower the value of its own duties by making them the duties of all men.”¹¹⁷ In short, a truly Jewish approach to Nietzsche would end up valuing the very elements that distinguish the Jewish nation from all other nations, further promoting the importance of culture as both the root and fruit of a thoroughly Jewish state.

Ha-am’s idealized vision is a Jewish nation founded on a distinct morality and with a culture that grows from and nurtures that morality. Having dealt with Berdichevsky directly, Ha-am used his reinterpretation of Nietzsche to take on the “mission of Israel among the nations,” or the attempt by some Jews to reconcile the idea of Jewish chosenness with modern ideas of equality.¹¹⁸ The mission approach to a Jewish state argued that the Jews were chosen in order to “spread good will and well-being throughout the world, by teaching mankind the way of life according to that true Law which was entrusted to [them] for this very purpose.”¹¹⁹ Ha-am gives the lie to this idea by pointing out “that the Jewish people as a whole has always interpreted its ‘mission’ simply as the performance of its own duties, without regard to the external world, and has regarded its election, from the earliest times to the present day, as the end of all else, and not as a means to the happiness of the rest of the world.”¹²⁰ The mission approach was thus the recognition of the “contrast between the possibilities and the actualities of Jewish history.”¹²¹ There was “a belief in that moral fitness for which we were chosen from all the nations, and in that national mission which consists in living the highest type of moral life,” but that belief had

been undermined “since the day when we left the Ghetto...we cannot help seeing that our superiority is potential merely.”¹²² That potential had been restricted “[w]e have been unable to fulfill our mission in exile, because we could not make our lives a true expression of our own character.”¹²³ Ha-am’s Jewish national ideal was the curative to this mission approach. Instead of being bound by the political whims and character of another nation, a truly Jewish state would be the expression of a distinct Jewish identity, the purification of which would be the goal of the society.

For many Zionists, Berdichevsky’s approach to Nietzsche held considerable appeal. The appeal to physical power, both in the present and through historical examples, translated well into the pioneer ethic that would shape many Zionists’ thinking.¹²⁴ Ha-am was nonetheless able to sharpen his Zionist ideology against the stone of Berdichevsky’s philosophy, just as the contrast with political Zionism gave his cultural approach a new clarity. Ha-am insisted on an identifiable Jewish ideal that, once developed, would be the basis for a thoroughly Jewish state. All other appeals, whether to German philosophy or mere expedience, would undermine the Jewishness of any resulting state.

The difference between East and West was starkly drawn in another of Ha-am’s minor essays of the time, *A New Savior*. The essay is a response to Salomon Reinach, a French Jewish scholar of art history and religion who took it upon himself to argue for the modernization of Judaism in the early 20th century, including the elimination of dietary laws and religious ritual.¹²⁵ In many ways, Reinach exemplifies the presumed superiority of Western Zionist over Eastern Jews, and the arrogance that follows from that assumption.

Ha-am explained that Jewish laborers from Palestine had gone to address the Council of the Jewish Colonization Association at their meeting in the previous October. Despite there

being no hope for the laborers' proposals, they spoke to each member of the Council individually and most members" received the deputation courteously.¹²⁶ One member, however, "shut his door in the face of the humble Palestinians, and gave them, instead of spoken comfort, a written insult."¹²⁷ With no small amount of sarcasm, Ha-am further explained that, even as the Council member turned the laborers away, "he was sitting in his study and seeking a remedy for an evil far greater than the hard case of some hundreds of workmen: to wit, the moral and material poverty of all the myriads of Jews in the East."¹²⁸ Ha-am then outlined the articles this member penned for a French Jewish paper that called on "the 'enlightened' Jews of the West to unite in aid of their brethren in the East, so as to free them from that 'inner slavery.'"¹²⁹ That inner slavery was "nothing more or less than the observance of the Sabbath and the dietary laws."¹³⁰ Quoting Reinach, Ha-am noted that "the Jews are cut off by their religious precepts...encouraging the false idea that they are strangers among the nations...This is the real yellow badge, which we must remove from our brethren."¹³¹ Ha-am went on to describe Reinach as "one of those Jews who are to the outside world the fine flower of Judaism, and so he is not ashamed to open the door to his world...and let everybody see how things are conducted inside."¹³²

Ha-am quoted Reinach at length from three articles that "breath[ed] an intense pity for his poor benighted brethren, so sadly in need of the light which he is prepared, at some personal sacrifice, to shed on them."¹³³ Ha-am then wondered "If he [Reinach] was able to emancipate himself without external aid, is it not possible that the poor Eastern Jews also may attain the same result by their own efforts?"¹³⁴ Reinach apparently did not believe so, instead thinking that "'in order to show them their mistake, there is need of reasoned argument, explanation of the social basis of morality, historical expositions, and so forth, all of which must be brought to them

from without.”¹³⁵ The tool Reinach advocated for emancipating Eastern Jews from their provincialism was “rational criticism, and with this weapon we are to cut the stout cords that bind us.”¹³⁶

Ha-am’s derision of Reinach is barely contained, in part because Reinach’s “weapon of rational criticism is not a very sharp one, nor a very new one.”¹³⁷ Two elements distinguished Reinach’s comments though. The first was Reinach’s position within the Zionist movement. Ha-am noted that “one is inclined to smile at the simplicity of this learned scholar; but the smile vanishes as one remembers that it is men of this kind who stand at the head of powerful organizations...here we have a man who has been appointed a steward of the congregation, of the whole people, who is one of the leading members of the Jewish Colonization Association and the *Alliance*.”¹³⁸ Reinach’s leadership role both made his attitude more influential and signaled the wider sharing of that attitude within the Zionist leadership.

As important as Reinach’s position was the attitude which drove his ideology. Ha-am noted that Reinach’s ideas were “not worth a moment’s notice, after a century of attempts at ‘religious reform,’ many of which have been more able and intelligent.”¹³⁹ What distinguished Reinach’s attempt was “its being made for the sake of other people, as a kind of charity.”¹⁴⁰ It was this sense of charity that seemed to have offended Ha-am the most. The “weapon” of rational criticism “has been lying about our [Eastern Jews’] streets for years past, and has actually become rusty.”¹⁴¹ Unfortunately, Western Jews like Reinach “cannot by any means be brought to understand how there can be among us intelligent men, familiar with all the theories of the learned world about the origin of the Sabbath and the other religious observances...and who can still find the Sabbath a delight, can respect and hold sacred the day which has been sanctified by the blood of our people, and has preserved it for thousands of years from spiritual

degeneration.”¹⁴² Here Ha-am obviously pushes back against the Western stereotypes of Eastern Jews as backward and ignorant, instead presenting an image of learned men who maintain their religious identities because “they value the national tie that unites them with [the Jewish public].”¹⁴³

The shift of the center of Zionism away from the East meant that “our distinguished brethren of the West see the Jews of the East coming to beg material aid of them in time of trouble; and apparently they are crass enough to suppose that these Jews confess also to a spiritual inferiority.”¹⁴⁴ Ha-am had already rejected this presumed moral superiority of assimilated Western Judaism, which afforded him the opportunity to reverse the argument at the end of the essay. Ha-am inveighed against the “inner slavery to which *they* condemn themselves when they barter their national spirit for paper privileges...could they but know this, they might perhaps understand how profound is the contempt which we, ingrates that we are, return them for their kindness when they come to emancipate us.”¹⁴⁵ For Western Jews who did not strongly identify with their Jewishness, the conclusion to Ha-am’s essay would read more like a threat of new militancy among Eastern Jewry:

We will fill your spiritual emptiness with Jewish feeling; we will bring you Judaism, not the fair-sounding, meaningless lip-phrase which is your confession of faith, but a living Judaism of the heart; inspired with the will and the power to develop and to renew its strength. And then you will change your tune about slavery and emancipation.

If you have eyes to see what is going on around you, use them! Here are these paupers coming from the East, and beginning already to exercise an influence on your communities, while you disdain to take notice of them. Even so the lordly

Romans in their day looked down on with contempt on the “paupers from the East,” until these paupers came and overturned their world.¹⁴⁶

The warning that a spiritual overthrow would be coming, and indeed, was nigh with the overlooked emigration of Eastern Jews, was likely intended to sound ominous. A movement Ha-am had come to know and one that he had adopted as his own was quickly being stolen away from him, and the new powers of the movement thought so little of he and his compatriots that they did not acknowledge the work that had already been done. Ha-am clearly bristled at the notion of Western superiority in any realm but the economic. The growing momentum of the World Zionist Congress left him with little practical recourse, however. His frustration was evident as his critique had shifted from identifying ideological faults that led to pragmatic difficulties among the Chovevi Zion to the personal attacks he leveled against the new Zionists.

In one of his longest essays, Ha-am was able to put aside the direct personal attacks to craft an extended outline of the differences between political and cultural Zionism. *The Spiritual Revival* was originally delivered as a speech to a group of Russian Zionists in Minsk before Ha-am reprinted it in HaShiloach, the Hebrew language journal where he served as founding editor. The speech had been an initial success for two reasons. First, Ha-am’s mere appearance at the conference was newsworthy. It was Ha-am’s first public statement at a Zionist meeting since 1898 and thus was well attended by his Russian audience.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, the early applause for the speech turned to criticism as discussion of Ha-am’s remarks turned to “cries of ‘anti-Zionism.’”¹⁴⁸ Such calls seem strange given that Zipperstein observes that the “theoretical underpinnings” of Ha-am’s speech “had won over an already receptive audience,” even as Ha-am’s “call for the creation of a new organization devoted to Jewish culture was rejected and Ahad Ha-am did little to further the idea.”¹⁴⁹ To have started from familiar premises which were

explicitly in line with the bulk of Zionist thought, it seems odd that Ha-am would inspire such a negative reaction from the programmatic ideals of the speech. At the same time, the speech was a relatively detailed separation of the cultural Zionist program from the political Zionist program. By drawing such explicit lines, Ha-am was sure to engender opposition.

The “problem of culture,” as Ha-am called it, was a consequence of political Zionism as prior to political Zionism. According to Ha-am, “[Zionism] knew only its own plain and simple aim: that of placing the Hebrew nationality in new conditions, which should give it the possibility of developing all the various sides of its individuality.”¹⁵⁰ In short, Ha-am argued that adding the qualifier “political” to Zionism effectively sought to remove considerations of culture. The definition of “political Zionism” was “simply the foundation in Palestine, by means of diplomatic negotiations with Turkey and other powers, of a ‘safe refuge, for all oppressed and persecuted Jews, who cannot live under tolerable conditions in their native countries, and seek a means of escape from poverty and hunger.’”¹⁵¹ Several pages of the essay draw on textual evidence from speeches of Zionist leaders and the official documents of the World Zionist Congress to show that the emergent ideology “had the effect of attracting attention mainly to the political aspect of Zionism, until the Zionist conception became narrowed down and lost half its meaning.”¹⁵²

Despite limiting the meaning of the term “Zionism,” Ha-am noted that political Zionists were not inherently opposed to cultural work. While they did not “regard it as Zionist work, [they] do not say that Zionists should not take it up,” but “[they] do not wish to make it obligatory on them because that would be mixing up Zionism with matters which are not essential to it, and have no necessary connection with its principles.”¹⁵³

The tolerant but unenthusiastic attitude of political Zionists toward cultural work aside, Ha-am once again reversed the argument and contended that “if you examine Zionist societies in various places, you will find that it is precisely such work that keeps them alive.”¹⁵⁴ Political Zionism, in Ha-am’s estimation “cannot provide its adherents with any other form of work which has greater attractions and a stronger hold.”¹⁵⁵ To that end, the call for an augmented effort toward cultural issues at the World Zionist Congress was an attempt to “save the honor of Zionism, and to preserve it from that narrowness and decay,” that would come from exclusively political action.¹⁵⁶

Beyond the fight over the scope of Zionist activity, Ha-am took the opportunity in *A New Savior* to further elaborate on his cultural ideal. As a restatement of the work he saw as the most valuable, *A New Savior* was a significant step in defining the ideology of cultural Zionism. First, Ha-am bifurcated the notion of culture into objective and subjective senses. The objective sense is historical, “the concrete expression of the best minds of the nation in every period of its existence.”¹⁵⁷ Subjectively then, culture is evaluated in the present tense, “the degree to which culture is diffused among the individual members of the nation, and the extent to which its influence is visible in their private and public life.”¹⁵⁸ The task of cultural Zionism was similarly twofold; “in the first place to perfect the body of culture which the Jewish people has created in the past...and in the second place to raise the cultural level of the people in general, and to make its objective culture the subjective possession of each of its individual members.”¹⁵⁹

As to the first task, Ha-am saw relatively little difficulty. The existence and persistence of Hebrew scripture meant that “the creative power of the Jewish mind will remain undeniable...Even those who deny that the Jews are a people at the present day are compelled to admit that when they were a people they were a *creative* people [emphasis in original].”¹⁶⁰ Of

course, that did not mean that all was well with the objective state of Jewish culture. The problem was not, as the Zionists were then arguing, that all Jewish culture produced in the diaspora was deficient and not truly Hebrew. The expedience of such a view was obvious since it “belittle[d] yet another side of the life of the exile,” making emigration to a new state that much more imperative.¹⁶¹ Though he acknowledged that the “unfavorable conditions in which we have lived since the Dispersion have naturally left their mark on our literary work,” the capacity for Jewish cultural expression had “undergone no change in its essential characteristics,” and plenty of “gifted men” remained in the Jewish community.¹⁶² Had the situation been otherwise and the diaspora quashed the Jewish creative spirit, “we should be compelled to doubt whether there were any hope for a revival of our creative power, even after the return to our own land.”¹⁶³ Instead, Ha-am maintained the belief that the diaspora itself was not to blame for any diminishment of the Jewish creative spirit.

Instead, the fact that “Hebrew culture has really become sterile” was a consequence of “emancipation and assimilation,” turning the blame back to the Western Jews who were minimizing the role of culture in the first place.¹⁶⁴ Ha-am saw no shortage of “gifted men” but lamented that the “neglect of our original spiritual qualities and the striving to be like other people in every possible way” had caused “their abandonment of Jewish national work for a life devoted to the service of other nations.”¹⁶⁵ In short, Ha-am was concerned by Jews who contributed to culture, but not to an identifiably Jewish culture. Those contributions evinced “the spirit of Judaism...a special and distinctive character,” but they were not explicitly focused on Jewish issues and they had no sense of nation to inspire such a focus.¹⁶⁶ For Western Jews, these contributions were reason to cheer because “so-and-so is one of our people...[t]he good of humanity is the one ideal of the future; to set up any other is a sign of petty tribalism and narrow-

mindedness.”¹⁶⁷ Ha-am disagreed, assuming that a person working in the culture that originally inculcated her or his consciousness was fundamentally different than a person working “among an alien people...inevitably tearing himself into two disparate halves.”¹⁶⁸ Thus “humanity at large suffers to some extent from the dispersion of our cultural forces,” again reversing the argument about a broad concern with a general good.¹⁶⁹

Despite his argument that Jewish artists in Jewish fields make a stronger contribution to humanity than Jewish artists elsewhere, Ha-am’s vision here remains provincial. He lamented the passing of Mark Antokolsky, a Russian Jewish sculptor who had begun his career working on specifically Jewish themes before exploring specifically Russian themes later on. Why, Ha-am asked, when “Antokolsky wished to produce a statue of a violent and cruel tyrant, steeped in bloodshed, universally dreaded, and yet not wholly dead to the voice of conscience,” did he choose Ivan the Terrible instead of “the more perfect type of such a tyrant,” the Roman king of Judea?¹⁷⁰ Ha-am’s criticism is that Antokolsky did not, in a specific instance, choose a specifically Jewish concern to address. That Antokolsky had previously chosen Jewish themes for his work was irrelevant, simply that he had not done so in this case. As a Russian though, Ivan the Terrible would have been as much a referent for Antokolsky as Herod, just as Herod is a referent for non-Jewish audiences. While there may in fact have been “two disparate halves” of Antokolsky’s identity as an artist, Ha-am’s demand was that one half be rent and discarded even though it was as natural an identity as the other. Particularly in light of the persistence of the diaspora in Ha-am’s ideology, it seems contradictory for him to seek effacement of all non-Jewish expression of culture. In order to maintain a Jewish presence outside of a Jewish state, the community would have to engage with the larger culture. Ha-am’s vision of culture flows from

Jews to the rest of the world, with no reciprocation; there is no culture that the Jewish community could or should get from non-Jewish nations.

Ha-am's cultural chauvinism may have come from a belief that Jewish culture was the pinnacle but it was more likely an overly defensive reaction to a perceived deficiency in the nation as a whole. While individual Jews may have exemplified the potential of a Jewish national culture, they plied their trades in non-Jewish fields. What remains in the Jewish nation is "only the smaller minds and those of poorer grain."¹⁷¹ The disconnection between the creative contribution of individually gifted Jews and the cultural level of the nation as a whole was tied to the lack of a common language for the national literature. The revival of Hebrew as a vernacular, particularly in the literary realm, is one of Ha-am's most enduring legacies. In *The Spiritual Revival*, he articulated his justification for the common use of a common language in order to raise the whole nation.

Ha-am's idea of a national literature was a discriminating one; "[t]he national literature of any nation is only that which is written in its own national language."¹⁷² In other languages, Jews may "reveal traces of [their] own national spirit," but literature "belongs wholly to the general body of literature of that nation in whose language it is written."¹⁷³ Even works which dealt exclusively and intentionally with Jewish issues could not be considered part of the national literature, but instead, "a Ghetto in a foreign literature; and this Ghetto, like any other, is regarded by the native population as of no account, and by the Hebrew community as a merely temporary byproduct... which cannot call forth, as a national literature does, a living and imperishable sentiment."¹⁷⁴ Specifically, Ha-am was concerned with the elevation of Yiddish, a German-Hebrew pidgin, as a candidate for the national language. The history of Yiddish as "an alien tongue acquired in a strange land" meant that it could never replace "another national

language, always recognized as such, in which it [the nation] produced a literature of wide range and glorious achievement.”¹⁷⁵ Moreover, the growing Jewish presence outside of western Europe meant that “the Jargon-speaking population will also decrease, until the Jargon is extinct.”¹⁷⁶ The combination of a poor fit and an inevitable decline meant that “labors in the service of Yiddish can have only this result: that after two or three generations we shall have *two* dead literary languages, instead of one, as at present, and that our descendants will consequently be morally bound, in the name of nationalism, to learn both of them from books.”¹⁷⁷ In short, only Hebrew could be the national language, and only works in the national language could be part of the corpus of national literature. Hewing to Hebrew would unify gifted men and poorer grain alike, and raise the cultural prestige of the Jewish nation.

The purpose of establishing a Jewish state then would be “the foundation of a national spiritual centre,” that would encourage Jewish culture.¹⁷⁸ Even as Ha-am repeated his claim that the material problem of the Jewish people could not be easily or quickly solved by a new state, he turned to the cultural center as a goal which could be realized in short order. Colonies were “nothing more than bricks for the building of the future: in themselves they cannot yet be regarded as a central force capable of moulding anew the life of the whole people.”¹⁷⁹ On the other hand, the value of cultural work was obvious and the establishment of a cultural center would be “a national work of the highest importance, and would do more to bring us near to our goal than a hundred agricultural colonies.”¹⁸⁰

Returning to his original argument that cultural work was supportive of political Zionism, Ha-am argued for a gradual approach to this spiritual center. Noting the relative failure of political Zionists to engage the support of the “synagogue organization,” Ha-am claims that it would have been better “if the watchword had been, ‘Win over the educational organization.’”¹⁸¹

There, Zionists could “lay out this energy on the conquest of children...a clean sheet on which we may write what we will.”¹⁸² Education would provide the means to unify the Jewish people across denominational and political lines, particularly the line between religious Jews and orthodox Zionists. The former were lukewarm at best to the idea of a Jewish state, while the latter “are themselves emancipated from this logical inconsistency.”¹⁸³ Ha-am concludes that “Zionism must demand from both sections...that each shall make the ideal of national revival, in the modern sense, the basis of education.”¹⁸⁴

Education and culture were mutually supportive efforts, of course, and so it made sense for the genesis of *The Spiritual Revival* to be a speech in front of a Jewish educational association. Indeed, Ha-am’s most enduring legacy is in educational practice and reform. The vision of culture he laid out in *The Spiritual Revival* however, was severely limited. Only Hebrew works were to be valorized, only explicitly Jewish works were part of the national identity, and only Jews in thoroughly Jewish settings could produce Jewish works. Similar debates break out today over the definition of Christian music and level of identification artists or particular songs must have with an explicit Christian message in order to count.¹⁸⁵ Those debates take on a similarly petty, provincial tone as partisans line up to condemn work, not because they find it objectionable, but because they do not find it embraceable.

Pinsker and Political Zionism

As the new century dawned, the divide between Eastern and Western Jews began to take definite shape, and began to diminish Theodor Herzl’s standing within the movement. While the World Zionist Congress had opened to great acclaim, the early promises had not been fulfilled. Herzl’s plans were denounced as “a considerable danger to the security and happiness of Jews around the world,” because he dreamt of “the creation of an impossible political organism” that

would do nothing to help the immediate needs of the majority of the world's Jews.¹⁸⁶ The Russian delegation to the World Zionist Congress spent considerable effort trying to unseat Herzl as the organization's leader.¹⁸⁷ In light of Herzl's perceived vulnerability, Ha-am penned another long essay dedicated to direct attacks on Herzl's leadership. Although he could not have known at the time that Herzl would die relatively soon, this final essay of the period effectively encapsulated Ha-am's judgment of Herzl and his program.

Pinsker and Political Zionism was originally published in 1902 under the title *Theory and Practice*. On its face, the essay compared Herzl and Max Nordau who led the World Zionist Congress alongside Herzl. As in Ha-am's discussion of Herzl and Nordau in *The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem*, Nordau enjoyed the better appraisal.¹⁸⁸ Nonetheless, the essay shows an awareness of the way Herzl had marginalized Ha-am. Having been overshadowed, *Pinsker and Political Zionism* was Ha-am's consciously self-referential attempt to maintain control of some elements of the Jewish nationalist program.¹⁸⁹ Ha-am drew an extended comparison between Herzl and Pinsker, arguing that Pinsker had already done much of the work Herzl was then claiming credit for. By then casting himself as the heir to Pinsker's legacy, Ha-am made an effort to reestablish his intellectual superiority within the movement. Zipperstein argues that *Pinsker and Political Zionism*

represented an act of aggression directed against Herzl whose pretensions, vacuity, and posturing threatened what little had been built by Jewish nationalism over the past twenty years. At the same time, it was an acknowledgement by Ahad Ha-am that leaders like Pinsker (and presumably himself) were not adept at the workings of practical political, although he remained unwilling to confront why this was so. For him, this was a product of myopia and the fickleness of the

crowd, a sad state of affairs that would persist until the politics he promoted were adopted.¹⁹⁰

In short, Ha-am tautologically blamed his failings in the political arena on the failure of the political arena to adopt his program. As aware as he was of his position within the movement, Ha-am seemed totally unaware of his inability to adapt his message to an audience, instead blaming the audience for somehow disappointing him. On the cusp of a transition of power within the movement, Ha-am's return to the history of settlement efforts was a final dyslogy on Herzl's legacy.

Ha-am began from the premise that Pinsker was "the true author of that theory [political Zionism], the real if unacknowledged fountain from which all who came after him have drunk."¹⁹¹ The Herzlian Zionists freely acknowledged that Pinsker and his contemporaries were precursors of the modern Zionist movement, but "they call themselves 'political,' denoting thereby, as they believe, the original feature which distinguishes them from their predecessors."¹⁹² Ha-am took up this essay "to explain Pinsker's teaching in relation to present-day political Zionism," but not without the argument that Pinsker "gave it a peculiar turn, making it approximate more to that Zionist ideal which is nowadays called 'spiritual Zionism.'"¹⁹³ Ha-am's purpose was clearly self-serving. If he could establish Pinsker as the true intellectual founder of Zionism, then demonstrate that Pinsker was aligned with cultural or spiritual Zionism, he could rightfully claim Pinsker's ideology as his own inheritance, justifying his claim to a role within the movement.

Ha-am quickly outlined the similarities between Herzl's program and Pinsker's twenty years earlier. Where Pinsker called for "a group of distinguished Jews, men of strong will and character" to comprise his "Directorium," Herzl used similar language to describe his "Society of

Jews.” Both sought support and leadership from wealthy Jews first. Both considered settlement outside of Palestine: Pinsker in America and Turkey, Herzl in Argentina. In the event of Turkish settlement, Pinsker’s Directorium would be tasked with securing the diplomatic support of the Ottoman Empire and other European powers and no land would be purchased or settled until that point. Of course, Herzl’s diplomatic efforts were directed toward the same end.¹⁹⁴ Ha-am thus concluded that “it was Pinsker who worked out the whole theory of political Zionism.”¹⁹⁵

Returning to the bifurcation he created in *The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem*, Ha-am argued that Pinsker’s initial concern was “the problem of Jewry—through a definite conviction that even emancipation and general progress will not improve the degraded and insecure position of the Jews among the nations,” rather than “the problem of Judaism—through the necessity of seeking for a new foundation for our national existence and unity,” just as it was for the political Zionists of the day.¹⁹⁶ Ha-am then takes up his now standard pragmatic critiques of political Zionism: “Granted that we have it in our power to establish a Jewish State: have we it in our power to diminish thereby the number of Jews in every country to the maximum which the economic condition of the country can bear without arousing their anti-Semitism?...so far we have not received a satisfactory answer.”¹⁹⁷ In other words, Ha-am could not see the prospect for a Jewish state that would be large enough to absorb and support emigrants from all of the world’s Jewish population. Ha-am’s explanation of Pinsker’s ideology assumed that there was, among other causes, an economic cause to anti-semitism that derived from the competition between Jews and non-Jews in a non-Jewish state. Until the population of Jews in those states could be reduced, persecution would continue even if there existed a Jewish state.

Here, then, Ha-am drew his distinction between Pinsker’s ideology and Herzl’s. The inability of the Jewish state to support enough emigrants was “fatal to the new Zionism,” because

“[t]heir primary aim is to improve the hard lot of the Jews *as individuals*.” [emphasis in original]¹⁹⁸ Pinsker, on the other hand, “weeps for a *nation* which is not regarded and respected by the other nations as an equal.”¹⁹⁹ Pinsker minimizes economic competition as the least important of the three causes of anti-semitism, instead focusing on “the degraded position of the Jews as a nation.”²⁰⁰ There was a disparity between the Jewish nation and the other nations “because since it was exiled from its land it has lacked the essential attributes of nationality, by which one nation is distinguished from another.”²⁰¹ While the Jewish nation remained spiritually distinct, the condition of exile only increased anti-semitism: “this spiritual nationality...is the very cause of their hatred for us as a people. Men are always terrified by a disembodied spirit, a soul wandering about with no physical covering; and terror breeds hatred.”²⁰² The statelessness of Judaism meant that “[t]he primary object of this hatred is not Jews as individuals, but Judaism...Hence we see on the one hand that individual Gentiles live in peace and amity with their Jewish acquaintances, while retaining their deep-seated animosity against Jews as a people...all nations remain at all times the same in their hatred of the Jews.”²⁰³

The economic solution sought by the Herzlian Zionists could never be achieved, but their failure was in targeting the wrong objective. Ha-am pointed to Pinsker’s differing purpose and broader concern for the nation, rather than the individuals who constituted the nation, as the turning point for Pinsker’s ideology. Thus, while Pinsker had sought a state and undertaken practical steps to begin establishing one, he differed from Herzl by not assuming that the state would be the panacea for individual suffering. Pinsker’s state assumed “the fact that even a Jewish state will not absolutely solve the Jewish problem on its economic side, and that the chief purpose for which we need a State is a moral one,” leaving the shape and function of the state very different from Herzl’s vision.²⁰⁴ So central was the moral problem to Pinsker’s vision that

his entire program was conditioned on the development of “a national consciousness strong enough to enable them to carry out the idea in practice.”²⁰⁵ Of course, the absence of a sufficient national consciousness did not stop Pinsker, as head of the Chovevi Zion, from sponsoring settlement activities, but he is generally thought to have embarked on settlement reluctantly and only by the persuasion of the Chovevi Zion Executive Committee.²⁰⁶

Pinsker’s failings as a leader aside, his theory of political Zionism was so complete that the Herzlians who followed, “so far from adding anything essential to his scheme, actually took away in large measure its ideal basis, and thus so seriously impaired its moral value that they had to have recourse to various promises which they could neither fulfill nor repudiate.”²⁰⁷ Pinsker and Herzl did not just differ in their motives, but to some degree in their tactics as well. Where Herzl minimized practical difficulties, “Pinsker does not find it necessary...he repeats many times, with emphasis, that only at the cost of infinite sacrifice will the goal perhaps...be reached.”²⁰⁸ Pinsker “recognises that it is not work for one generation alone...Not so Herzl...never tired of promising that it will be very easy to carry out his project in a short time, if only we want it.”²⁰⁹ Not only did Ha-am judge Pinsker’s program superior, but his style as well.

If, further, we take into account the wide difference between the two pamphlets in style, we may see that Herzl’s pamphlet has the air of being a translation of Pinsker’s from the language of the ancient Prophets into that of modern journalism.²¹⁰

Ha-am’s turn to a standard of eloquence should come as no surprise given the importance of language to his conception of culture. The prophetic language of old represented the Jewish nation at its creative peak, while modern journalism committed the tripartite sin of being modern, vulgar, and not distinctively Jewish. Thus Herzl’s language might achieve some diplomatic

successes, but it would not meet Pinsker's perceived need for "a single people, strong by virtue of our unity and our indomitable will," without which no diplomatic consent would be sufficient to sustain a state.²¹¹

And yet, despite Pinsker's superior intellect, Ha-am admitted that Pinsker was not the man to lead the movement toward a state. Pinsker's record was evidence enough of that as he "did little, and did not achieve in his ten years of work half as much as the leader of the new Zionism has achieved in five years."²¹² Pinsker was the type of man who was "simple-souled and pure-minded to a degree, innocent of the tricks and wiles of diplomacy," and thus unable to "attract the mob and bend it to their will...descend to its level, pander to its tastes, and pipe to it in a hundred tunes."²¹³ Herzl and the other new Zionist leaders had such skills and thus their program was pragmatically advantaged. Ha-am did not see the divide between Pinsker and Herzl as intrinsically damning of the latter man, but Herzl's conduct as the leader of the Zionist movement was. Ha-am acknowledged that "theory and practice are two departments which no doubt depend on each other, but each one needs special abilities and different qualities of mind, which can with difficulty be combined in one man."²¹⁴ Ha-am was comfortable with the notion of Pinsker as "the originator of the gospel of Zionism, and Herzl its apostle."²¹⁵ Indeed, this arrangement recalled Ha-am's distinction in *Priest and Prophet* between the prophet who generated an idea and carried it forth with an unbending passion and the priest who would carry the idea forward after the prophet was gone, bureaucratizing the idea and implementing on a broader scale.

The problem then was not Herzl's subservience to Pinsker, but Herzl's unwillingness to acknowledge it. Ha-am believed it was proper "for the apostle to recognise the originator and to acknowledge his greatness: as he spreads the gospel, so he publishes abroad and sanctifies the

name of him who brought it.”²¹⁶ Instead, Herzl adopted the Zionist banner with concern for his own reputation and “must needs ‘originate’ the gospel itself all over again—in an inferior form, it is true—so that all should be his.”²¹⁷ The consequence of Herzl’s self-aggrandizement was that “Pinsker’s wonderful pamphlet has sunk with him, and the Zionist gospel itself has become more superficial and materialistic...At present Zionism has no ‘Bible...Pinsker’s pamphlet is the only one that is worthy to take the first place in the literature of Zionism.”²¹⁸ That Ha-am again concerned himself with the expression of Zionism rather than the leaders of Zionism is no surprise. Within the culturalist ideology, the expression itself was the thing. From the standpoint of its eloquence and its program Ha-am saw Pinsker’s writing as superior to Herzl’s, even as Herzl was an admittedly more effective leader. In the superior expression, Pinsker became the superior icon of Zionism which speaks clearly to Ha-am’s priorities.

Conclusion

By the time of Herzl’s premature death in 1904, he was the personification of the Zionist movement, even as his direct influence had waned. From the beginning of his rise, however, Herzl had rankled existing Zionists because of his obvious ignorance of the movement history and the apparent shallowness of his own thinking on Zionism. Ha-am spent the intervening eight years as Herzl’s most prominent opponent, casting aspersions on the World Zionist Congress from the outset. The consequence of focusing his criticism on a single target meant that Ha-am’s writing took on an intensely personal tone which obscured his ideological program. Sifting through the vitriol however leaves a remarkable ideological consistency. Ha-am criticizes the World Zionist Organization for its materialism, its impracticality, and the mistaken prioritization between cultural work and observable results, just as he criticized the Chovevi Zion for the same problems ten years earlier.

Despite his ideological consistency, the second period of Ha-am's writing helps explain one significant reason behind his relative lack of success. The unpopularity of his ideology and its minority status was not sufficient to explain Ha-am's marginalization in light of Herzl's rise given that he had spoken unpleasant truths to the Chovevi Zion. The difference was Ha-am's personal investment in the argument and the shift from his identification with cultural Zionism to his identification as an opponent of Herzl's. In his earlier writings, Ha-am has sought to elevate the movement through a purification of its motives and tactics. Following the instantiation of the World Zionist Congress, Ha-am sought to use the same ideology to tear down Herzl and rather than the purification of the movement, he seemed to be driven by a very personal quest for recognition. Ha-am could have used the higher profile of the World Zionist Organization to spread his ideology to a broader audience, but the relative pettiness of his arguments was a weight around his neck. Ha-am found himself valorizing the Chovevi Zion he had earlier charged with the same sins of which he now accused Herzl. In doing so, Ha-am forfeited the goodwill that had been rightfully his at the dawn of the political Zionist movement, undermining the prophetic ethos he had crafted.

Chapter Four: Zionism Moves On: Ha-am and History After Herzl

Following Theodor Herzl's premature death in 1904, the Zionist movement underwent wrenching change. Without Herzl as the titular leader of the movement, the center shifted toward the large Russian contingent. After Herzl's death, Ahad Ha-am also shifted. While he had spent most of the preceding decade condemning the political Zionist movement, Ha-am's final period of writing was marked by a turn toward the examination of Jewish culture, the same culture he hoped would form the basis of the Zionist project going forward. Between 1904 and 1912, Ha-am published some of his longest works and also some of his most philosophical and abstract. In the absence of a personal target, Ha-am's thinking rooted itself in Jewish history, particularly the way Jewish morality had distinguished itself within a primarily Christian world. Ha-am's embrace of religion was cultural and historical rather than pious, and explicitly aimed at an extended examination of the Jewish ideal—moral and cultural—and how a Jewish state could fulfill that ideal. The six essays I examine in this chapter form a surprisingly consistent, if relatively narrow, ideology of Jewish nationalism. As such, they also represent the culmination of Ha-am's thinking on Zionism, bookending his public career with a fundamentally optimistic return to the land for which and over which Ha-am contended for twenty years.

Over the course of the third period of his public writing, Ha-am completed his vision of the moral and cultural ideals of Judaism, the relationship between those ideals and the structure of an identifiably Jewish state, and then saw how the Zionist movement began to incorporate his ideology into its pre-war operations. The previous fifteen years of antagonizing and bickering with the Zionists sharpened Ha-am's ideology and as he moved away from personal attacks, he provided the clearest statement of what cultural Zionism hoped to achieve.

Transition within the Movement

After Herzl's, two realities within the Zionist movement came into sharp relief through the agenda and actions of the seventh World Zionist Congress in the summer of 1905. First, Herzl's political strategy had yielded precious few results. At the time of Herzl's death, "it was only too transparent that his policy, the diplomatic approaches in Constantinople and various European capitals, had failed."¹ The Congress voted "unequivocally" to promote settlement in Palestine rather than diplomacy, believing that diplomatic concessions would be easier to obtain with a larger Jewish presence. The shift in policy was "a less than oblique rebuke to the Herzlian fixation with purely governmental negotiations."²

The shift to the practical work of settlement betrayed a broader trend of factionalization within the movement as well. In some ways, the fissures within the movement could be seen as a sign of strength insofar as differences could arise without sundering the entirety of the Zionist congress.³ The factions, however, made the generation of a coherent message almost impossible. One divide emerged over the issue of the East Africa offer in which the British government had offered land for a Jewish state in what is now Uganda. At the sixth Zionist Congress in 1903, Herzl had prevailed by convincing the Congress to endorse an expedition to examine the land and report back, despite the objections of the Russian delegation and others. When settlement in Africa was roundly rejected at the seventh Congress, a group called the Territorialists walked out and set up a shadow congress nearby. The Territorialists secession weakened the larger Congress, and was just one example of the rifts that had surfaced in the wake of Herzl's passing.⁴ In 1905, the movement appeared to be "at the end of its tether... [Herzl] had been both president and prophet, and there was no leader in sight able to inspire similar enthusiasm and confidence."⁵

Moses

With no center to the Zionist movement, Ahad Ha-am changed the focus of his work. The gradual rise of practical Zionism over political Zionism blunted his criticism as practical Zionism incorporated cultural work in addition to settlement. In that context, Ha-am's writing took on a much more cultural and historical tone rather than the plainly political writing that had marked him to that point. The change in Ha-am's focus was dramatically demonstrated in his essay *Moses*, published in 1904, an essay that was devoid of any reference to current events or policy. *Moses* is "by common consent [Ha-am's] finest essay, a kind of lay sermon on the prophet as the supreme Jewish type."⁶ *Moses* was, in some ways, the extension and synthesis of ideas from Ha-am's earlier essays, specifically *The Transvaluation of Values* and *Priest and Prophet*. Where *The Transvaluation of Values* asserted the existence of a Jewish ideal apart from the Nietzschean superman, *Moses* was an attempt to sketch that ideal in reference to common Jewish culture.

Ha-am opened the essay by differentiating between the "real great men of history" and the "actual people who lived at a particular time in the past."⁷ The open acknowledgment that "not every truth of archaeology is also a truth of history" effectively severed the discourse from any premise of literal truth, and by not relying on such a premise, Ha-am demonstrated his departure from religious orthodoxy.⁸ The important element in the assessment of historical figures in this view is not "whether the source of this influence was once a walking and talking biped, or was never anything but a creature of the imagination labeled with the name of some actual man," but the mere fact that the figure has had influence in the culture of a particular people.⁹ To that end, Ha-am held Moses up as the ideal figure of Jewish culture.

The image of Moses was "a creation of the Jewish spirit; and the creator creates in his own image. It is in figures such as this that the spirit of a people embodies its own deepest

aspirations.”¹⁰ Sketching Moses’ image then “will enable us to discover what the Jewish people regard as the ideal type of hero.”¹¹ Without explicit reference to *The Transvaluation of Values* then, Ha-am set his purpose to building the Jewish answer to the superman; if the Nietzschean method was to be adopted, Ha-am wanted to see it dedicated to a distinctly Jewish purpose. The Jewish superman would be embodied (for the moment) in Moses as the personification of the ideal prophet Ha-am described in *Priest and Prophet*. Ha-am went so far as to call Moses “the ideal archetype of Hebrew Prophecy in its purest and most perfect manifestation.”¹²

Two characteristics were necessary to Moses’ identification as the ideal prophet. First, the prophet is “a man of truth,” who sees things “as they actually are, not through a haze of personal predispositions; and he tells the truth as he sees it, without regard to the consequences.”¹³ Even more than the prophet’s ability and willingness to see and tell truth, the prophet is marked by “truth-telling [as] the law of his nature.”¹⁴ The prophet as an ideal type is bound to the truth and bound to its expression; truth-telling is the *sine qua non* of the prophetic type. Additionally, the prophet is an “extremist” who “can accept no excuse, admit no compromise.”¹⁵ In short, the prophet seeks to remake the world in an image of the prophet’s own rather than shaping his vision to accommodate the world as it is. Consequently, the “Prophetic spirit...has to be transmitted through intermediaries, and to undergo a process of adaptation, before the world can bear its impact.”¹⁶ Ha-am saw these qualities in all of the Jewish prophets, but most clearly in Moses.

Ha-am then explains how the details of Moses’ life fit immediately into the archetype of the prophet. In his youth, for example, Moses retaliates against an Egyptian beating a Jewish slave and, contrary to his identification as an Egyptian, intervenes on the side of the slave. Similarly, his intervention in a quarrel between two Jews the following day demonstrated his

unwavering and innate sense of justice. Moses “draws no distinction between man and man, only between right and wrong.”¹⁷ These few stories are, as Ha-am pointed out, all we know of Moses before the central story of the Exodus from Egypt. Ha-am concluded that the stories were intended “to show that the Prophetic quality was there from the beginning.”¹⁸ All other details that might have been included in a biography were “not of sufficient importance to call for any detailed record.”¹⁹

Moses’ sense of justice may not have made a distinction between “man and man,” but Ha-am nonetheless extolled Moses for his distinct focus on the Jewish nation. While Moses “always tried to succor the oppressed, he has always preached truth, peace, and charity,” God’s voice speaking to Moses through the burning bush awakened in him a new desire to remember the suffering of his own people.²⁰ The new mission “strengthened and rejuvenated” him:

Now he knows the road to the goal that he has been seeking all his life. Hitherto he has spent his strength among strangers. Years of life with them have not made him other than a sojourner in their midst, or gained him their esteem or following. He might invoke their gods, and still they would not believe him. But now he will go to his own people, and will speak to them in the name of the God of his father and their own. They will know him and honour him; they will listen and do his bidding. So his ideal kingdom of justice will be established on earth by his people after he has delivered them from bondage.²¹

That the purpose of Moses’ life should reach full fruition only when he returns to his own people reinforced the value of Jewish efforts in Jewish fields, a theme developed in *The Spiritual Revival* and suggested an implied qualification for the ideal prophetic type. The Jewish ideal was

not just a prophet with a universal sense of justice, but a Jewish prophet with a universal sense of justice derived from Judaism and exercised in ways that would protect the Jewish nation.

The Jewish ideal personified in Moses was, as Ha-am noted at the beginning of the essay, divorced from any “archaeological” truth about the life of an actual human being named Moses. Hence, Moses’ influence on the Jewish nation would continue long after his “archaeological” death such that “there is in fact no period of our sombre history in which a Mosaic spark cannot be detected.”²²

Embedded within Ha-am’s valorization of Moses as the ideal type, is the distinction between the prophet, who works to shape the world to his own vision, and the priest, who accommodates the prophet’s message to the world as it is. By calling the prophet an “extremist,” Ha-am recognizes that the Jewish ideal is a national aspiration, but not an individual one. If the Mosaic image were one to which all Jews were called, there would be no Jewish nation as each person would seek to remake the nation for themselves. Ha-am’s next essay of this period attempted to define the proper role for the masses of the nation, still drawing on Nietzsche, but pointing toward a distinctly Jewish ideal.

The Supremacy of Reason

In December 1904, Ha-am wrote one of his longest essays to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the death of Maimonides, one of the most revered Jewish philosophers. Much like his earlier commemoration of Leon Pinsker, Ha-am prefaced his work by lamenting the neglect into which Maimonides’ work had fallen. Ha-am set himself to the purpose of “unearth[ing] the central idea of Maimonides from beneath the heap of musty metaphysics which is so foreign to us, and to show how there sprang from this central idea those views of his on religion and morality.”²³ What followed was what Simon called Ha-am’s “solitary excursion into the field of

pure scholarship.”²⁴ Zipperstein presents a somewhat less charitable interpretation arguing that *The Supremacy of Reason* was not written with any “real detachment,” but was instead “profoundly engaged and the turbulence of the nationalist movement would clearly reverberate through it.”²⁵ Zipperstein’s assessment is plainly the more accurate one, but the purported lack of a political agenda also gave Ha-am license to more fully explicate his vision of the cultural basis of the Jewish state, making the arguments in *The Supremacy of Reason* central to understanding Ha-am’s larger ideology.

The first substantive section of the essay is an outline of Maimonides’ philosophy writ large. While noting that Maimonides borrowed liberally from Arab philosophy, Ha-am showed that Maimonides separated humankind into two species, “the difference between which is greater than that between mankind as a whole and other kinds of animals.”²⁶ All people are born with a rational faculty of the soul, but this remains a potential faculty for most people who do not exercise it to “the actual apprehension of Ideas.”²⁷ Thus the two species of humans are those who have developed their rational faculty into “acquired intellect” and whose “essential form is ‘the higher knowledge,’” and those for whom the rational remains a potential faculty and perishes along with their physical form.²⁸ Extending the arguments he had already made against Nietzsche, Ha-am identifies this acquired intellect as the Jewish ideal rather than the physical superman of Nietzsche’s Aryan philosophy. Ha-am then explained that Maimonides went beyond his Arab inspiration to specify the content and method of the acquired intellect.

The exercise of the rational to apprehend Ideas did not include learning in abstract sciences, such as mathematics and logic, normative sciences, such as ethics and aesthetics, or “the knowledge of individual forms, such as the lives of famous men and the like.”²⁹ Instead, the rational faculty must focus on the “Ideas...whose content is true and eternal Being.”³⁰

Accordingly, this was reflected in Maimonides' moral hierarchy of actions and study. At the top of the scale is the study of physics and metaphysics, "that one activity which leads direct to the goal—the apprehension of eternal Being." Below that, mathematics and logic are important as prerequisites to the study of Being, and below that are subjects with "a practical aim."³¹ Actions are similarly ranked, parallel to the hierarchy of studies. Actions which lead to the perfection of character are well-regarded, while those actions which have a physical purpose "have positive moral value only in a limited sense: in so far as they effectively keep away physical pain and mental distraction, and thus allow a man to give himself untroubled to the pursuit of Ideas."³² This hierarchy became central to Ha-am's application of Maimonides' philosophy in the second section of the essay.

Ha-am then returned to the two species of humankind to ask "What is the purpose of the existence of the great mass of men 'who cannot picture the Idea in their souls'?"³³ Ha-am argued that the purpose of the majority of humanity "lies not in its own existence, but in the fact that it creates the conditions necessary to the existence of the minority: it creates, that is, human society, with all its apparatus of civilisation, without which it is impossible that wisdom should spread."³⁴ The relation of the majority of humanity to the minority of "acquired intellects" is much the same as the relationship between soil and crops. The soil has little value on its own, but is instead valued for its ability to produce something else.

Just as the soil is valuable because it can produce crops, individual crops are less important than the larger condition of the soil which must be preserved in order to remain productive. So too does Ha-am subordinate the acquired intellects to the needs of the majority society; "For as society becomes more perfect, and the material basis is provided with less expenditure of effort, so much the greater will be the possibility of producing the perfect being

with more regularity and frequency...the well-being of society is more important than that of an individual man, even though he belong to the perfect few.”³⁵ Again, this is an explicit reversal of the relationship between the ideal and the masses in Nietzschean thought, where the superman could legitimately exploit and abuse those who were lesser. For Ha-am, the needs of the majority still predominated over the individual, no matter how virtuous that individual. This map of the relationship between the ideal person and the common people provided the framework for the second section of the essay in which Ha-am addressed the role of religion.

From the outset, Ha-am is clear to subordinate religion to philosophy. Maimonides, he argued, “constructed his theory of human life solely on philosophical foundations, and he did not modify his philosophy in the slightest degree out of regard for the religious ideas which were accepted by Jews in his age.”³⁶ The mythos of religion, including the creation narrative and the divine inspiration or transmission of the Torah, were not conclusively proven true or false to Maimonides, thus one could believe in the supernatural elements of religion “without any sin against our reason.”³⁷ The more salient question for a believer was to ask

what is the purpose and use of the divine Torah. It can scarcely be supposed that God would interfere with the order of nature for no purpose at all; and if we cannot understand the working of the divine wisdom in every detail, we must and can form some general idea of the object for which the divine religion was given to us and the way in which it can help men to perfection.³⁸

Ha-am contended that religion, because it relies on divine revelation rather than knowledge obtained through one’s own effort, cannot raise the intellect of the believer. Thus, religion was not meant for the minority of acquired intellects, the perfect few as he called them, but “we must conclude that its whole purpose is to prepare the instrument which is necessary for

the attainment of that end; and the instrument is society, which creates the environment needed for the ‘actual man.’”³⁹ In other words, the purpose of religion was to regulate society in such a way as to make it more fecund for the development of acquired intellects. Such regulation was achieved by religion issuing “true opinions in a form suited to the intelligence of the many,” alongside “a code of morals, individual and social,” both of which were augmented by “a code of religious observances intended to educate the many by keeping these true opinions and moral duties constantly before their minds.”⁴⁰ Religion thus served a vital cultural and social function, even as it remained “absolutely subordinate to reason.”⁴¹

With Maimonides’ system thus laid out, Ha-am turned to the modern context to apply Maimonides to Zionist thought. Given the purported scholarly agenda of the essay, such a shift must have seemed odd to Ha-am’s readers. Even the most sympathetic biographer must grant that in this essay “the publicist in Ahad Ha-am could never be entirely suppressed” and consequently he “ends by raising, and answering in the affirmative, the question whether Maimonides was unconsciously what we should now call a Jewish nationalist.”⁴² Ha-am based his answer on the political situation of Spanish Jews during Maimonides’ youth and some ineffable motive in Maimonides’ psyche.

The Jews of Spain during Maimonides’ youth were persecuted by Muslim religious authorities. Judaism was generally outlawed and many Jews publicly converted to Islam, while others continued to practice their Judaism in secret. So it was that Maimonides grew up in “an atmosphere of lying and religious hypocrisy. Judaism had to hide from the light of day; its adherents had to wear a mask whenever they came out of their homes into the open.”⁴³ Ha-am argued that the simultaneous claims on divine revelation made by Judaism and Islam led Maimonides to distrust uncritical faith in religion and turn instead to an ultimate good that did

not rely on particular action or conduct. Maimonides did not abandon all religion, however. He remained a Jewish laborer in Jewish fields; rather than extending rationalism to the whole world, he applied it specifically to the nature and practice of Judaism. Ha-am argued that Maimonides' "intense love of Judaism, which ought to have inclined him not to extend but to restrict the empire of reason," must be explained by "some psychological factor, some inner motive force."⁴⁴

Ha-am asked then whether Maimonides' thought could be brought to bear on the contemporary situation:

First: did Maimonides recognise the supremacy of the national sentiment in the spiritual life of his people and did he consciously and deliberately allot to it an important place in Judaism? And secondly: do we find traces of the dominance of the national sentiment, as an unconscious and spontaneous instinct, in the mentality of Maimonides himself?⁴⁵

Despite acknowledging that there was little overt evidence of Maimonides' nationalism to be found, Ha-am still saw signs "that in Maimonides himself the national sentiment was a powerful though unconscious force."⁴⁶ For several pages, Ha-am attempted to make the case that Maimonides was a secret nationalist. By the end of the section, Ha-am seemed to recognize the weakness of the case, adding "but there is really no need to look for the influence of the national sentiment in particular aspects of Maimonides' work. The fact is that without the sentiment the whole of his work would have been unthinkable."⁴⁷ The implicit endorsement of cultural Zionism by one of the brightest lights of Jewish history carried obvious appeal, but there was another force driving Ha-am to draft Maimonides to the culturalist movement.

In *Moses*, Ha-am did not put forth Moses as an example to which individual Jews should aspire, but as the highest expression of the culture of Judaism. The gap between what was

culturally valorized and what was realizable was too huge to simply express the ideal and leave the rest of the society to futilely spend itself in pursuit of the ideal. Ha-am recognized as much in *The Supremacy of Reason* and needed to account for the masses of Jewish culture. Just as Moses had been the Jewish alternative to the superman, Maimonides was the Jewish alternative to Nietzsche himself. The dichotomy between the acquired intellects and its absence in the overwhelming majority preserved some form of cultural ideal, but reversed the relationship between the idealized persons and everyone else. What Ha-am found in Maimonides was a vision of a national structure that would incorporate religion but subordinate it to a broader culture, while preserving both the superiority of Jewish culture relative to other cultures and the superiority of cultured Jews relative to other Jews. The vision Ha-am extracted from Maimonides became a lasting touchstone for his ideology. The significance of cultural work in Ha-am's thinking was derived from the ideal of the cultured, learned, moral Jew and explains why cultural efforts took priority over the practical or political work of settlement.

Ha-am's reliance on Maimonides as a means of supporting the Mosaic ideal also represented a key argument about the distinctiveness of Jewish culture. In *Moses*, there was an identifiable figure who personified the ideal, while the ideal derived from Maimonides' philosophy had none of the mythic overtones. There was no one the average Jews should aspire to emulate, no ideal average person to model oneself after. Ha-am believed that this absence of personification was a distinctive element of Judaism and that creating a spiritual center in Palestine, a key goal of his ideological program, would substitute cultural influence over all Jews for the individual influence a personified exemplar would exercise. Ha-am used *Moses* to explore what Jewish culture could achieve, while *Supremacy of Reason* established the roles of individual Jews within a society that supported that culture. To an certain extent, *Moses*

represented the “why” behind cultural Zionism and *Supremacy of Reason* represented a “how.” The remainder of Ha-am’s writing in this period sought to integrate his vision with the maturing activity of the larger Zionist movement by putting the conflict between political and cultural Zionism into historical context and then revisiting the work of the Zionist movement in Palestine.

Flesh and Spirit/A Spiritual Centre

Flesh and Spirit is considered the third of Ha-am’s outstanding trio of essays, alongside *Moses* and *The Supremacy of Reason*.⁴⁸ Those three essays are certainly linked chronologically, but the focus on the spiritual center that was an integral element of Ha-am’s ideology links *Flesh and Spirit* with *A Spiritual Centre* thematically. *Flesh and Spirit* was, like *Moses* and *The Supremacy of Reason*, based in Jewish history rather than an explicit response to the state of the Zionist movement. *A Spiritual Centre* then expanded on the notion of a spiritual center that Ha-am proposed as the anchor of the Jewish state.

Flesh and Spirit was Ha-am’s answer to the argument that cultural Zionism focused on the ephemeral to the exclusion of the practical; Ha-am rejected the dichotomy between the physical presence of a state and the nationalistic identity of such a state. The natural approach to Ha-am’s goal would be to assume the value of cultural work and then insist on the value of practical work as well. Ha-am instead constructs his argument around the historical Jewish rejection of asceticism, which he defines as the “turn from pleasures of the world with hatred and contempt, and to regard every good thing of life as something evil and degraded.”⁴⁹ Such asceticism “has its source in hatred and contempt for the flesh. It makes war on the flesh not for the sake of some further end, but because the flesh in itself is unworthy and despicable, and degrades man, who is the flower of creation.”⁵⁰ Ha-am held that the division of self into a

consciousness and a body was fundamentally wrong. Moreover, the separation of the body from the self was not Jewish.

Instead, Judaism found both extreme spirituality and extreme asceticism suspicious. The spirit was not conceived of as something apart from the body, but as something whose absence would render the body inanimate, and which, without the body, could not find expression. More significantly, Ha-am argued that Judaism recast the question of the body from the individual to the social. Judaism “found ‘eternal life’ on earth, by strengthening the social feeling in the individual by making him regard himself not as an isolated being, with an existence bounded by birth and death, but as part of a larger whole, as a limb of the social body”⁵¹ Through this focus on the collective rather than the individual, Judaism mitigated the impact of individual suffering so that each person “no longer feels so keenly the bitterness of his individual existence, because he sees the end for which he lives and suffers.”⁵² The cultural prioritization of the collective was key because this mitigation of suffering “can only be so when the life of the community has an end of such importance as to outweigh, in the judgment of the individual, all possible hardships.”⁵³ Mirroring the relative importance of the nation that Ha-am derived from Maimonides’ philosophy, Ha-am argued that ancient Jewish thought had always applied to the national life the same principles that other cultures had applied to the individual. Even when the destruction of the first Temple forced a reconsideration of the unity of spirit and body, Jewish thinking preserved the symbiosis in the national life.

The destruction of the second Temple, on the other hand, brought about some measure of change. The Essene sect, according to Ha-am, “saw corruption eating at the very heart of the Jewish State...they saw the best minds of the nation spending their strength in a vain effort to uplift the body politic from its internal decay.”⁵⁴ So the Essenes abandoned the political life of

Judaism, regarding it as poisonous to spiritual life, and adopted a distinctly Jewish expression of asceticism. The Essenes did not hold much sway over the Jewish populace though. Instead, the Pharisees led the people and “upheld the Jewish view which was handed down from the Prophets: that is, the combination of flesh and spirit.”⁵⁵

The Pharisaic position was “that spirit without flesh is but an unsubstantial shade, and that the spirit of Judaism could not develop and attain its end without a political body, in which it could find concrete expression.”⁵⁶ The Pharisees make for a convenient example for Ha-am because he noted that even as they “opposed the political materialists within, for whom the State was only a body without an essential spirit,” they also “fought together with these opponents against the enemy without, in order to save the State from destruction.”⁵⁷ Only when the state was in its death throes did the Pharisees distinguish themselves from their fellow Jews by surrendering to the Roman armies on the condition that they be given control of Jabneh as the scholarly center of Judaism. While the Pharisees fled to “find some temporary means of preserving the nation and its spirit even without a State...the political Zealots remained sword in hand on the walls of Jerusalem.”⁵⁸ Ultimately, Ha-am credited the Pharisees with creating the structure in which “the Hebrew national spirit has had its abode and lived its life for two thousand years.”⁵⁹ Compared to the Essenes who believed that Jewish spirit could prosper without any of the structure or form of a national life, the Pharisees were to be celebrated.

The comparison to Ha-am’s contemporary situation was obvious. Throughout the essay Ha-am rejected the idea that the spirit could exist without the flesh but the historical example to which he turned rejected the exclusive pursuit of the form of a Jewish state. The implicit rejection of the Zealots, who fought for the form of the state even as the spirit of the state had removed itself, was a comment on political Zionists. The explicit rejection of the Essenes was

Ha-am's method of positioning cultural Zionism as the middle approach by attacking those who focused only on a state and those who denied the need for a proper state in which the Jewish spirit could flourish. Much like a political candidate might attack an extreme wing of his or her own party to appear more moderate, Ha-am's rejection of the exclusively spiritual approach to the Jewish nation was a signal that cultural Zionism sought a state, but only as a secondary goal. The approach of the political Zionists was in error as well because it prioritized the political form of the state alone. Ha-am believed that both extreme positions were wrong and that "the fundamental principle of individual as of national life will be neither the sovereignty of the flesh over the spirit, nor the annihilation of the flesh for the spirit's sake, but the uplifting of the flesh by the spirit."⁶⁰

Jabneh proved a powerful historical example for Ha-am as he expanded on the cultural idea of a Jewish state in his later essay *A Spiritual Centre*. Published in 1907, the essay clarified what Ha-am meant by his proposal of Palestine as a spiritual center for world Jewry, particularly in response to criticism that the spiritual focus of Ha-am's ideology excluded concern for the material and physical. Ha-am's vision continued to draw on the philosophy he had derived from Maimonides in *The Supremacy of Reason*, but took a somewhat more concrete form.⁶¹ Ha-am acknowledged that the cultural work required "a place like any other place, where men were compounded of body and soul, and needed food and clothing, and for this reason the centre would have to concern itself with material questions."⁶² Ha-am was surprised that it was the spiritual nature of his center that elicited criticism. He expected that the notion of a center, which "involved a negation of the idea of a return of the whole Jewish people the Palestine," would be the controversial element of his proposal.⁶³ Instead, his critics "poured out all the vials of their wrath on the epithet 'spiritual,' as though it contained all that was new and strange in the idea."⁶⁴

The idea of a center clearly preserved the diaspora in Ha-am's ideology. Ha-am had previously argued that the diaspora would persist because of the practical. In this case, he argued that the preservation of the diaspora was intrinsically good, rather than a simply a limitation of a new state. The center, as Ha-am explained, was "a particular spot of thing [which] exerts influence on a certain social circumference, which is bound up and dependent upon it, and that in relation to this circumference it is a centre."⁶⁵ Just as the center is defined by the circumference over which it exerts influence, "in relation to all that lies outside the circumference it is merely a point with no special importance."⁶⁶ In other words, the persistent diaspora would be the mechanism by which Jewish influence could spread, and it would be the only mechanism. If all of the Jews were gathered into Palestine, the circumference of the state would be limited to the borders of the state. On the other hand, the continued existence of Jews in other countries would spread Jewish culture, leavened with local ingredients, to all corners of the world. The example of Jabneh was a telling one as Ha-am never aspired to a full ingathering of all Jews everywhere, but simply a center for Jews, from which Judaism could spread as a cultural force. The next question was whether Judaism had a unique contribution to make to the rest of the world.

Judaism and the Gospels

The Russia in which Ha-am lived had been openly hostile to Judaism and Jews, a hostility that did not diminish with the arrival of the Zionist movement. In 1903, for example, the Easter Sunday pogrom in Kishinev left forty-two Jews dead (including at least three children) and almost five hundred wounded with no intervention by the civil authorities until an order came from the Russian Minister of the Interior, himself a noted anti-Semite.⁶⁷ Shortly before the Sixth Zionist Congress, Herzl was able to secure an audience with von Plehve, the aforementioned Interior Minister, to discuss Zionist activities in Russia. By appealing to

Zionism's ability to spirit away Jews who would have otherwise sullied Russia's "homogenous population," Herzl was able to convince von Plehve to allow Zionist activity openly. That such political and fundraising activity could only be justified by appealing to violent anti-semitism speaks to the position of Jews within the Russian empire at the turn of the century.

Ha-am spent a portion of his adulthood living in London where the position of Jews could have hardly been more different. After resigning as the editor of *Ha-Shiloah* in 1902, Ha-am took a position with the Wissotsky tea company that allowed him to move to London but maintained his ability to write while still satisfying his material needs, a microcosm of the societal structure he had teased out of Maimonides' philosophy. While in this position, Ha-am was suddenly able to write a series of longer, more thorough essays. After half a decade in London, Ha-am felt obligated to devote one of those essays to the Jewish-Christian syncretism he saw as ascendant among British Jews. While the violence and oppression in Russia had pushed Jews into strongly identified communities, the relative freedom and safety of Britain had led them to reconsider the need for a distinct Jewish identity altogether. In response, Ha-am penned *Judaism and the Gospels*, an essay that belongs alongside the *Fragments*, *Flesh and Spirit*, *Moses*, and *The Supremacy of Reason* in the canon of his thought.⁶⁸

Ha-am noted a trend in the Reform movement among English Jews toward "a conviction on the part of many that they are spiritually *akin* [italics in original] to their Christian environment."⁶⁹ Ha-am compared the British movement unfavorably with the German Reform movement which was driven by the political exigence of anti-semitism. The Germans made changes to religious experiences and practices, but "they laid stress on the grandeur of the religious and moral principles on which Judaism peculiarly was based, and tried to emphasise the *difference* [italics in original] between Judaism and Christianity."⁷⁰ Members of the British

movement, on the other hand, “have decreed that the New Testament (or at least the Gospels) must be considered a part—and the most important part of Judaism, and that Jesus must be regarded as a prophet—and the greatest of prophets—in Israel.”⁷¹ In short, the Reformers were seeking to obliterate the differences between Judaism and Christianity and to see the former grafted on to the latter.

Ha-am lauded efforts to produce Jewish commentaries on the Gospels, provided such efforts’ “sole object must be to *understand* thoroughly the teaching of the Gospels, to define with *scientific* accuracy its character, the foundations on which it rests, and the differences which distinguish it from Judaism.”⁷² Such efforts were useful to Jews who lived “in a Christian environment,” and “[imbibed] a culture in which many Christian ideas and sentiments are interwoven.”⁷³ Jewish study of the Gospels would demonstrate that “it is possible to treat with seriousness and justice a religion which is strange to us, without shutting our eyes to the gulf which separates it from ourselves.”⁷⁴ The projects to which Ha-am was responding intended to eliminate that gulf by reshaping Judaism into a branch of the Christian tree, a purpose upon which he heaped scorn, declaring “the Gospels can be received only into a Judaism which has lost its own true spirit, and remains a mere corpse.”⁷⁵ Ha-am then turned his attention to mapping the differences between Judaism and Christianity as a form of rebuke to the Reformers’ project.

That Ha-am would find the purpose of the project itself distasteful is no surprise. First, Ha-am took as a given the notion of a distinct Jewishness. Not only was the existence of Jewishness assumed, but also the value of that Jewishness, creating a situation in which action taken to preserve and revitalize it was justified. Indeed, those assumptions underlay the entirety of Ha-am’s project. Second, Ha-am had addressed this situation in *Imitation and Assimilation*, one of the *Fragments*, arguing that the genius of Judaism was its ability to incorporate a foreign

spiritual force into a cultural tradition for its own purpose without effacing the Jewish self-identity. The Reformers' project was nothing more than such self-effacement and their attempts to incorporate moral precepts from Christianity without any translation or modification would undermine any sense of a distinct Jewish identity. Ha-am did not dismiss Christianity, but simply the Reformers' attempts to import it wholesale into Judaism.

What followed then was not a commentary on the Gospels, but Ha-am's mapping of the gulf between Judaism and Christianity. Ha-am wanted to describe the unique contribution made by Jewish culture to show what would be lost if the Reformers' project succeeded, to set the conditions under which the Gospels might contribute to Judaism, and to create a cultural justification for a Jewish state. That third purpose only became clear at the end of the essay, so focused was Ha-am on his attack on a particular book that laid out the Reformers' argument. Ha-am rejected the state of mind of the Reformers, noting

History has not yet satisfactorily explained how it came about that a tiny nation in a corner of Asia produced a unique religious and moral point of view, which has had so profound an influence on the rest of the world, and has yet remained so foreign to the rest of the world, unable to this day either to conquer it or to surrender to it. This is a historical phenomenon to which, despite a multitude of attempted answer, we must still attach a note of interrogation. But every true Jew, be he "orthodox" or "liberal," feels deep down in his being that there is something in the spirit of our people—though we know not what it is—that kept it from the high-road taken by other nations, and impelled it to build up Judaism on those foundations for the sake of which the people remains to this day confined "in a corner" with its religion, being incapable of renouncing them. Let them who still

have this feeling remain within the fold; let them who have lost it go elsewhere.

There is no room here for compromise. [italics in original]⁷⁶

Ha-am's position here is entirely consistent with his expansive definition of Judaism as a cultural and religious phenomenon, rather than an exclusively religious one, but the tone of hostility toward Jews who deny the distinguishing characteristics of Judaism is new. Ha-am's Jewish state is premised on the existence of those distinguishing characteristics, welcoming anyone who would embrace the distinctiveness of Judaism as a generative site of culture. If there is a red line to be drawn around the state, however, it is in those who might identify as Jews without any appreciation for what that identification means.

The essay notes two distinctions between Judaism and Christianity. Ha-am identified the essential characteristic of Judaism as "its absolute determination to make the religious and moral consciousness independent of any definite human form, and to attach it *immediately* to an *abstract* ideal which has 'no likeness.'" [italics in original]⁷⁷ Judaism, in other words, functions without a personified ideal for adherents to model their own conduct after. "We cannot conceive Christianity without Jesus, or even Islam without Mohammed," Ha-am argued, which distinguished Judaism from the other religions that were relevant to the European experience at the time.⁷⁸ While Ha-am had identified Moses as the Jewish ideal in an earlier essay, Moses represented the apex of societal aspiration, not a model of individual behavior in the way Jesus and Mohammed are. Moses was also a mythic ideal, not necessarily composed of historical fact. Moreover, Ha-am noted that Moses' significance was not something inborn, but something he acquired through his mission:

thus the Jewish teachers of a later period found nothing to shock them in the words of one who said in all simplicity: "Ezra was worthy to be the bearer of the

Law to Israel, had Moses not come before him” (*Sanhedrin, 21a*). Could it enter a Christian mind, let us say, to conceive the idea that Paul was worthy to be the bearer of the ‘message,’ had not Jesus come before him?⁷⁹

Had Moses not been the Jewish icon, someone else would have been worthy because it was the mission he fulfilled rather than something intrinsic to Moses that elevated his status. The same was true even of the Messiah whose importance “lies not in himself, in his being *the messenger of God*.” For that reason, “Jewish teachers pay much more attention to ‘the days of the Messiah’ than to the Messiah himself.”⁸⁰ Ha-am simultaneously explained one reason behind the Jewish refusal to accept Christianity and one of the enduring differences between the two faith systems.

The Jewish lack of reliance on a personified ideal is natural in light of the dichotomy between priest and prophet that Ha-am relied on in prior essays. The prophet generated a new vision for society, but was unable to see that vision implemented because of the extremism intrinsic to the prophetic identity. As the society moved forward to implement the prophet’s vision, the prophet himself became less important and the need for a personified mythos became unnecessary. Moses brought the Law down from Mount Sinai, but was not important to the setting up of a state that would implement the Law. So it was with all of the Jewish prophets, of whom little is known, according to Ha-am: “we do not even know who or what they were; their personalities have vanished like a shadow, and only their words have been preserved and handed down from generation to generation.”⁸¹

The absence of a personified mythos was, in and of itself, not significant except that it led to the second major distinction Ha-am drew between Judaism and Christianity. In place of an exalted persona, the Jewish ethic was one of universal justice that “draws no distinction between

man and man.”⁸² Ha-am used that phrase to describe Moses’ sense of justice rather than praising some sort of inborn superiority of Moses himself. To Ha-am’s reckoning, the focus on a universal justice was the ultimate distinction between Judaism and Christianity. Most importantly in Christianity, the overriding ethic was altruistic. As Ha-am explained it, altruism was the inverse of egoism in as much as both “deny the individual *as such* all *objective* moral value, and make him merely a *means* to a subjective end; but egoism makes the ‘other’ a means to the advantage of the ‘self,’ while altruism does just the reverse.”⁸³ Altruism subjugates the self to the service of the other, which reverses the hierarchy of an egoist ethic, but still maintains a hierarchy that dictates the value of one life over another. Ha-am argued that the Jewish sense of justice valued all individual lives rather than asking one person to sacrifice for another. Through a series of hypothetical cases (should two people split a bottle of water in the desert if it means both will die, or should only one drink? Should one person kill another when the first person will be killed if the murder is not committed? Are the rich or the poor to be favored in moral decisions?) Ha-am illustrated the differences between Jewish and Christian answers to ethical dilemmas.

At root though, the Jewish ethic of justice takes the decision about an individual’s life out of the individual’s hands. Because every individual life is valued by God, “no man is at liberty to treat his life as his own property; no man has a right to say: ‘I am endangering myself; what right have others to complain of that?’”⁸⁴ This was a return to the collective purpose of the society being raised above that of the individual, as the “Law of Judaism sees its goal not in the ‘salvation’ of the individual man, but in the prosperity and perfection of the general body; that is to say, of the nation, and in ‘the latter end of days,’ of the whole human race.”⁸⁵ The individual is subsumed, not to other individuals, but to the greater good of the masses.

Ha-am also pointed to the relationships between societies as proof of the superiority of Jewish ethical principles. Christian altruism could not function as the basis of international relations and as a result, “national egoism inevitably remained the sole determining force in international politics, and ‘patriotism,’ in the Bismarckian sense, attained the dignity of the ultimate moral basis.”⁸⁶ On the other hand, the Jewish sense of blind justice rejected a nation’s belief that “its moral duty lies in self-abasement, and in the renunciation of its rights for the benefit of other nations.” Similarly, Jewish justice would not permit a nation “to fulfil itself through the destruction of other nations.”⁸⁷ The scriptural prescription of peace that is common to both Judaism and Christianity was better achieved through a Jewish nation implementing a Jewish ethical stance.

While Ha-am’s argument about the benefits of a Jewish ethical position was significant, the more important argument was that a distinct Jewish ethical position merely existed. Given that Ha-am had rejected the idea that Zionism would solve the problem of anti-semitism, a Jewish state that had Jewish culture at its root would need to be different from other states to justify its existence. Jewish culture had to be distinct from the dominant Christian culture in Europe and, to a lesser extent, the Muslim culture of the Middle East. *Judaism and the Gospels* was Ha-am’s final statement on how Judaism differed and why such a difference mattered. Ha-am had been arguing for such a difference for two decades, and the parallels between *Judaism and the Gospels* and some of his other essays is remarkable. *Judaism and the Gospels* also bookended his career by reiterating the moral principles at the heart of the criticisms he leveled at the Chovevi Zion and the settlers in previous decades for seeking their individual fortune at the expense of the national identity. Just as *Judaism and the Gospels* repeated the themes of Ha-

am's earliest essays, the final major essay of his career followed a visit to the settlements, as *Truth from Eretz Yisrael* had done twenty years before.

Summa Summarum

In 1911, Ha-am attended the tenth World Zionist Congress in Basel, only his second such congress. Following the congress, Ha-am spent seven weeks in Palestine, visiting settlements and forming opinions of the work done since his previous visits. Much like his visits in the days of the Chovevi Zion, Ha-am traveled as a skeptic. He was not an official representative of any group, nor was he convinced of the rightness of the movement's approach. Unlike his assessment in *Truth from Eretz Yisrael* though, Ha-am left Palestine optimistic about the future of Zionism. Of course, his optimism was not solely a consequence of his visit. The tenth Congress had seen the replacement of the leadership in place since Herzl's passing, the approval of consolidated land purchasing programs, and the endorsement of Hebrew as the official language of Zionism.⁸⁸ The new leaders included Chaim Weizmann, who considered Ha-am a significant influence, calling him the "foremost thinker and stylist of his generation."⁸⁹ Weizmann's rise and the implementation of new programs demonstrated the rise of "synthetic Zionism" which consciously blended Herzl's political approach and the practical approach of settlement.⁹⁰ While the movement had clearly left Ha-am behind (note Weizmann's praise of Ha-am within "his generation," not the movement at large), he nonetheless saw that it was heading in a direction that more closely matched the ideal he sought. While Ha-am's final major essay, *Summa Summarum*, was primarily concerned with the condition of Jewish settlements in Palestine, and not the World Zionist Organization as a whole, the changes made at the Tenth Congress nonetheless must have had a salutary effect on his judgment.

Ha-am opened the essay by acknowledging that the movement had gone beyond him, leaving him “on the threshold of age.” From that position he chose to take a broad view on his visit, asking what the purpose and results of the movement had been. Ha-am’s view was fundamentally a positive one and he noted “it is a long time since I spent such happy days as those of my travels,” and then concludes, “one fact is becoming increasingly clear: our work is not an artificial product, a thing that we have invented to give the people something to do, as a palliative for the national sorrow.”⁹¹ Ha-am did not moderate the priority he placed on cultural work, but much like the blending of approaches in synthetic Zionism, he came to appreciate the contribution practical work made toward cultural aims and retreated from his criticisms.

Ha-am’s account of the Tenth Congress paints a picture of ideological confusion between the ascendant practical Zionists, the “victors” who “stood up and promised to guard faithfully the Basle Programme and ‘the Zionist tradition developed during fourteen years’” of political work, and the political Zionists who had retreated from their insistence on anti-semitism as the root of Zionist motivation, left to doing nothing more than “describing the evil... The essential thing—the ‘therefore’—was lacking almost entirely.”⁹² The political Zionist program, without anti-semitism as the *sine qua non* of the Jewish state, had lost its center. Ha-am criticized the practical Zionists for failing to “recognise and acknowledge that the end of which they speak to-day differs from that of the ‘Zionist tradition.’”⁹³ The muddlement inside the hall notwithstanding, Ha-am took heart from the visitors to the Congress. They were “a body of Jews of a new kind: men in whom the national consciousness is deep-rooted... and all-pervading and all-embracing sentiment.”⁹⁴ The men at work inside the Congress could “make speeches and believe that they are hastening the redemption” of the nation. The results of the Congress meant the “distant redemption may not be any nearer; but the estranged hearts are drawing near.”⁹⁵ Zionism had,

finally, activated a national sense of identity in the Jewish people, a goal toward which Ha-am had long been working.

Within that work, the animating controversy had been the divide between cultural goals and other goals. In relation to the Chovevi Zion, Ha-am saw the practical work of settlement as premature, ill-advised, and a distraction from the more important cultural work. In relation to Herzl, Ha-am saw the political approach as doomed to fail. The practical and political had dominated the collective purpose of Zionism, leaving Ha-am “distressed by this dualism; [he] used to fear that we might lose the right path—the path of life—through making for a goal to which no path can lead.”⁹⁶ Having visited Palestine again in 1911, Ha-am resolved the dilemma when he recognized “the workers have had one goal in view, and have been unconsciously approaching another... Whether we ourselves understand the true import and purpose of our work, or whether we prefer not to understand—in either case history works through us, and will reach its goal by our agency.”⁹⁷ The goal was a simple one in Ha-am’s estimation, and inevitably history would shape the “instinct of self-preservation” toward “just what our national existence requires most of all at present: a fixed centre for our national spirit and culture, which will be a new spiritual bond between the scattered sections of the people, and by its spiritual influence will stimulate them all to a new national life.”⁹⁸

The work Ha-am observed in Palestine left him surprisingly optimistic, particularly because he saw the projects failing to achieve their intended purpose. The promise of Zionism was not to be found in Basel, but Ha-am did not feel that it was found in Palestine either where “they have almost forgotten the wider prospects. Realities are too strong for them there: they can see nothing beyond.”⁹⁹ The institutions of Zionist settlement had fallen short, with the National Bank losing the confidence of settlers and foreign contributors alike because “all that it does for

Jewish colonisation...is so little, that one cannot even conceive any possible connection between it and the 'larger aims,' or imagine it to be moving at all along the road that leads to complete 'redemption.'"¹⁰⁰ The National Fund was similarly beleaguered, having spent much of its money for only "a few scattered pieces of land, lost in the large areas of land not redeemed."¹⁰¹ Efforts to create an agricultural base of Jewish workers were also unsuccessful because the Jewish man "wants to live like a civilised being; he wants to enjoy, bodily and mentally; the fruits of contemporary culture; the land does not absorb his whole being."¹⁰² Jewish farmers thus depended on non-Jewish laborers and without a foundation of the rural proletariat, Ha-am did not see a future for the Jewish state. Ha-am argued that if "labourers cannot succeed in supplying what is lacking, that proves that even national idealism is not strong enough to create the necessary qualities of mind and heart."¹⁰³

To that end, Ha-am was pleased to see discussions underway about how to improve the condition and quantity of Jewish labor in Palestine. The work was not complete though. Despite the problems, Ha-am remained optimistic because he saw progress toward the ideal of "a national spiritual centre of Judaism, to which all Jews will turn with affection, and which will bind all Jews together...a true miniature of the people of Israel as it ought to be." He concluded, "if you wish to see the genuine type of a Jew...then go to Palestine, and you will see it."¹⁰⁴ The ideal had not been met, but sufficient progress had nonetheless been made that Ha-am felt confident that a visitor to Palestine could return home "speaking of the 'genuine type of a Jew,'" and say "Go to Palestine, and you will see it *in the making*"[italics in original].¹⁰⁵

Ha-am saw in the fits and starts of the institutions of settlement "power-stations of the national spirit," which would serve as "a large number of points of vantage over the whole surface of Palestine."¹⁰⁶ Each establishment of a small agricultural colony was a small success

because a traveler could move between them, creating a situation where “the intervening space seems to him nothing more than an empty desert, beyond which he reaches civilisation again, and breathes once more the refreshing atmosphere of Hebrew national life.”¹⁰⁷ Outside of the agricultural colonies, there were similar “generating stations,” such as the Jewish sections of Jaffa and Tel Aviv. Ha-am recognized the criticism that the National Fund had purchased relatively small plots of land in the cities, rather than the large swaths of land the funds were ostensibly intended for, but when a visitor to one of those cities “observes its life, and sees the Hebrew children who are growing up there, he will not criticise the National Fund for having made it possible to found such a generating station.”¹⁰⁸

Ha-am also saw hope in the growing trend of Hebrew education. Like the urban land purchases, he noted that education did not strictly fit with the goals of the Zionist program to redeem the land, but “what can logic do when instinct pulls the other way?”¹⁰⁹ Throughout Palestine, Ha-am saw the same committed practical Zionists who would dismiss the value of education “using a great deal of their energy in educational work in the country; and Zionists generally value such work and turn to it more and more.”¹¹⁰ The establishment of Hebrew education in Palestine was “a real thing, a natural, inevitable phenomenon; its disappearance is inconceivable...All who knows how things used to be must confess that there has really been a revolution in Palestine, and that the Hebrew teacher has won.”¹¹¹ Moreover, Ha-am saw the success of Hebrew education as “a worthy model for Jews throughout the world, a standard type of national education, to which they will endeavour to approximate so far as the conditions of the Diaspora allow.”¹¹² Education was the ideal vehicle for Jewish influence in Palestine to spread, and the work done by Jews in all sectors of Palestine bolstered Ha-am’s belief that a future Jewish state would be built on the foundation of a national identity that was flourishing in a

specific place before reaching out to Jews all over the world. The success of the relatively meager efforts to that point was impressive to Ha-am who noted “all these generating stations, whether in the country or in the cities, are welded together in our thought, and appear to us as a single national centre, which even now, in its infancy, exerts a visible and appreciable influence on the Diaspora.”¹¹³

What is missing from Ha-am’s discussion is any consideration of non-Jews’ involvement in settlement activities. As notable as Ha-am’s address of those issues had been in 1893, the absence of those issues at a time when the Zionist movement had become widely aware of Arab resistance to settlement is equally conspicuous. Except for mention of non-Jewish laborers who constituted the bulk of the workers in Palestine, Ha-am did not apparently concern himself with the position or opinion of the Arab Palestinians during this visit. Ha-am’s blindness to those issues may have been the consequence of a man wanting to end his public career on a positive note or it may have been a consequence of eighteen intervening years of development of Jewish colonies and institutions that obscured the role of the Arabs.

Nonetheless, Ha-am returned from Palestine optimistic that a Jewish culture was growing there and that Jews around the world would be able to turn to Palestine as the center of their shared culture to understand what the culture meant and could achieve. As the last major essay of Ha-am’s career, *Summa Summarum* evinced a decidedly different tone than any of his other work. The malaise that seemed a perpetual cloud over Ha-am’s writing and work lifted and the rhetorical melding of his cultural goals with a belief that those goals could be reached allowed Ha-am to end his public work in a more optimistic register than ever before.

Conclusion

Ahad Ha-am's third and final period of public work was in many ways a return to the trajectory he took in his first eight years of writing, before Herzl created the World Zionist Organization. Many of the themes were the same and Ha-am took an abstract or philosophical approach to the relevant issues rather than being explicitly driven by current events within the movement. Many of Ha-am's most important essays came from this period, and certainly he presented a more coherent vision of what cultural Zionism aimed for than he had previously. Ha-am's ideas were also more accepted within the movement, having become an important element of the synthetic Zionism of Weizmann, even if Ha-am himself did not play a large role in the Zionist organization, but left others to interpret and implement his ideas. In the case of the grand structure of society he outlined in *The Supremacy of Reason*, the idea itself was too large and the reforms to implement it too sweeping to ever be realistic. On the other hand, the movement had taken up the value of cultural work and Ha-am's reaction in *Summa Summarum* reflected that development. Culture was not something that any single rhetor could control or shape, but the idea that there was a culture and that it should be nurtured could be traced to Ha-am's influence.

The changes in Palestine that Ha-am noted in *Summa Summarum* represented the beginnings of a nascent Jewish culture that was no longer secondary to the culture of other countries but could instead engage with other dominant cultures on a more equal field. Jewish writers could explore the tensions between Jewish identity and citizenship in the United States or Great Britain or Russia in a new way. The resident of the Jewish ghetto could never attain the standing to confront the dominant national culture and anyone who could attain such standing had done so at the expense of his or her Jewish identity. But in Palestine, a genuinely Jewish culture could flourish. That is not to say that Ha-am was in any way responsible for that shift in

the status of Jews and Judaism relative to other cultures, but Ha-am influenced and described that shift. The existence of distinctly Jewish writing and fine arts in Palestine bolstered the status of Jewish culture elsewhere, capitalizing on the American and western European inclusion of Jews as full citizens. Even with the political changes in liberalizing democracies, the cultural significance of Judaism would have been diminished without the rise of a trans-national Jewish culture in Palestine.

Ha-am's third period of public work saw a confluence between the cultural work he advocated and celebrated and the practical work of setting up a state that he had previously condemned. Ha-am's recognition of the co-evolution of the two types of work gives credence to his recurrent prophet/priest dichotomy. Ha-am could not admit the value of practical work nor retreat from the priority of cultural work until he saw the simultaneous implementation of both practical and cultural goals. Having railed against the practical and political Zionists for years, Ha-am's apparent change of heart demonstrated his unfitness to lead the movement in any significant capacity. Ha-am was the Mosaic extremist who could only work to bend the world to his vision. It took the efforts of the synthetic Zionists to bend Ha-am's vision to reality and to find value in that vision that could be realized. Once Ha-am saw the fruits of those efforts, his public career was effectively over. While he did not address the question directly, one imagines that Ha-am's prophet would lose the fire of extremism as soon as he was able to see the value of compromise. So it was for Ha-am upon his 1911 visit to Palestine, after which he fell mostly silent.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Future Research

Ahad Ha-am's retirement from public commentary did not end his involvement with the Zionist movement, but it did bring his rhetorical trajectory to its end. It is the focus on Ha-am as a rhetor that distinguishes my analysis from previous work on Ha-am and his legacy. Zipperstein, as noted in chapter one, sought wisdom from Ha-am with regard to the current situation in Israel. Such an impulse is understandable given the way Ha-am has been deployed in recent years as a symbol in Israeli political discourse. Ha-am has been cited as an influence on some of the most respected intellectuals in Israel, and so it seems natural that he would provide useful commentary on modern Israel.¹ Nonetheless, Zipperstein found Ha-am "provincial" and "elusive," leaving his study with what appears to be an unsatisfying conclusion. Ha-am's simultaneous relevance and irrelevance seems to be a puzzle of history. How can a man who was so significant in his own time and exerted an influence on some of the most important contemporary figures in Zionist and Israeli thought, be almost unknown outside of intellectual circles in Zionism?

An answer comes not from the traditional biographical/historical treatment that Zipperstein engaged, but from rhetorical analysis. Ha-am's influence is indeed curious given his reluctance to take formal leadership positions with the Zionist movement and his utter failure when he did take such positions. Ha-am recognized early on that he was poorly suited for political leadership. One of the consistent themes through all three periods of his work is the dichotomy between the priest and the prophet. The prophet is fiery, passionate, and unyielding in his vision for the world. The prophet must shape the world to his prophecy, even if that means remaking the world from its very core. The priest, in contrast, moderates the prophet's message, fitting the message to the world as it is. Without the priest, the prophecy would remain

unyielding and unfulfilled in any measure. The priest needs the prophet to identify a purpose while the prophet needs the priest to bring his or her message to the world.

Ha-am recognized the dichotomy early in his career. In *Priest and Prophet*, the prophet was the standard bearer for an idealized Jewish theory of universal justice, a theory which marked Judaism as distinct for having developed it in the first place. In *Pinsker and Political Zionism*, Pinsker represented the prophet to Herzl's priest. The former originated an idea that he was poorly prepared to advocate to all of the needed audiences. The latter was perfectly positioned to spread a vision to the masses and to create the necessary structures to try to make that vision a reality. Ha-am did not see himself as one of the people. He was the uncompromising visionary and they were the unactivated masses, easily led astray by incomplete or dangerous ideas.

Given that vision, Ha-am's refusal to take or keep formal leadership positions is no surprise. Sitting at the head of an organization would have required him to make tangible progress and such progress would have required flexibility and compromise to make a program amenable to other relevant stakeholders and actors on the political stage. Ha-am would have had to do as Herzl did, making approaches to foreign heads of state and leaders within the Jewish community to ask for their support. Particularly given the very long-term program of cultural Zionism, Ha-am likely knew that he could not achieve any sort of success on a schedule that would allow him to remain in a position of formal influence. A failure as a leader would inevitably be seen as a failure of his ideology as well, so Ha-am eschewed positions that would carry rank, prestige, or expectations.

Moreover, any position within the movement would have been dependent on the patronage of other leaders. To take a position, Ha-am would likely have had to moderate his

criticism in order to preserve the appearance of unity within the movement. One of the key achievements of the First Zionist Congress, one which Ha-am lauded at the time, was the expression of Jewish nationalism with a voice that transcended existing borders and barriers. The unity behind that expression was a key factor in any success that Herzl achieved and to have detracted from it would not only have been anti-Zionist, but would have been inimical to Ha-am's pan-Judaic rhetoric. Staying outside of the structures of the movement permitted Ha-am to be an unrestrained critic without undermining the structure that Ha-am hoped to turn to better purposes.

In addition to the practical considerations, Ha-am was likely kept from political power by a strong self-image. Ha-am clearly saw himself in prophetic terms, which created an unbridgeable divide between the prophet and the people. Ha-am believed that he could not bring himself to modify or moderate his ideology so he avoided a formal position that would have imposed constraints on his advocacy. As noted in the first chapter, Ha-am's reclusiveness and elitism was a vestige of his Hasidic upbringing, one that clearly remained long after he had rejected Hasidism.² Ha-am's elitism meant that he "offered counsel to many but asserted no leadership."³ The decision to avoid leadership positions would have been entirely in line with Ha-am's expressed ideology, and one that would have preserved his freedom to criticize the movement in strident tones.

The coincident conclusion of Ha-am's public career and his publication of *Summa Summarum* was no accident. What Ha-am saw on the visit to Palestine that he described in *Summa* was the incorporation of his culturalist ideology into the practical work that marked the Zionism of the day. Prior to that visit, Ha-am had treated cultural work and political work as somehow exclusive, such that the pursuit of political ends by political means was assumed to

preclude the pursuit of cultural ends by any means. Ha-am's visit, however, showed him what the priests could do with the prophet's message. Weizmann and the other practical Zionists had consciously incorporated cultural Zionism into the settlement work they were doing in Palestine, building schools just as they were buying land. The movement was organized in a way that it had never been under Herzl (or Pinsker before him) and was making recognizable progress toward a state that would not only serve Judaism politically, but culturally as well. For the first time, Ha-am saw cultural reform being implemented and it brought a natural end to the rhetorical trajectory he had plotted for the previous fifteen years.

That trajectory is clear at this point: a transnational identity based in the shared language and history of the Jewish people, open to both believers and nonbelievers, giving rise to the traditional products of a culture and, eventually, a political home that would place Jews on equal footing with the other nations of the world and serve to perpetuate the distinctive Jewish identity on which it was based. Once Ha-am saw the dualism between cultural and political Zionism break down under the banner of practical Zionism, his argument had reached its end. There was no longer a benefit to be accrued by attacking political action nor was there a need to convince the broader Zionist movement of the need for cultural work. The priests had adapted the prophecy to the world-as-it-was, rendering the prophet himself superfluous. As a political actor, Ha-am had undoubtedly failed, but as a rhetorical actor, his ideology made Zionism hop around in a unique way.

This study of Ha-am as a rhetorical actor, separate from his work as a traditional political or bureaucratic actor, highlights the contribution rhetorical studies make to studies of historical and contemporary movements. As a political actor, Ha-am is clearly a minor figure. Theodor Herzl founded the World Zionist Organization, Chaim Weizmann was instrumental in the final

creation of a Jewish state, David ben-Gurion helped bring the state into being, Moshe Dayan fought for the new state, and countless others have played immanent roles in the history of Israel. However, none of those historically significant figures played as large a role in shaping what it meant for Israel to be a Jewish state in cultural terms as Ha-am, even as that debate continues to this day.

Indeed, understanding Ha-am as an influencer of culture is critical to understanding his motivation as a rhetor. Because of his relatively sheltered childhood and his self-directed expansion into unsanctioned learning, Ha-am understood the power of culture as a source of influence. The Hasids' banning of certain books or topics of study surely created a mystery around the forbidden materials leaving a young Asher Ginsberg to wonder what could be contained in a novel or a philosophical exploration that would threaten someone. His own personal transformation through unauthorized cultural products imbued Ha-am with a sense of the potential that cultural expression has to constitute identity. The shared fate of Jews in 19th-century Russia could not bring the Hasids together with the *haskalah*, much less the more secular Jews of western Europe. A deeper connection, one that transcended the disparate political realities of eastern and western Jews but was intrinsically connected to those realities, was necessary to create the sort of unity necessary to a Jewish state. Other Zionists saw that connection as forged in the past and looked to politics and diplomacy to shape the future directions of Jewish world. Ha-am saw the connection as a present concern and projected the work of shaping and strengthening it into the future. The question of what it meant, and what it would continue to mean, to be a Jew was treated as settled by other Zionists. Ha-am recognized that Jewish identity was more than a legalistic formula and more than a minor concern. To that end, his role as a Zionist rhetor is quite important.

Reading Ha-am Into the Present Conflicts

The influence of Ha-am's rhetorical trajectory continues to this day. One obvious locus of Ha-am's influence is in the conflict over the conditions of coexistence of Jews and Arabs in Palestine/Israel. Ha-am was the first major figure in Zionism to recognize the potential for conflict with the existing Arab inhabitants of the land. Of course, Ha-am's response (detailed in chapter 2) may not have been as humane as a modern response would be, but he distinguished himself by recognizing a common identity among the Arabs and an intrinsic dignity that demanded respect. In the interwar years, Ha-am came to regard the appropriate treatments of the Arab Palestinians "a central feature of Jewish Palestine's civic culture, a litmus test of its viability as a community."⁴ Moreover, Ha-am fundamentally shaped the debate over the Israeli reaction to Palestinian tactics, especially as the latter grew more violent. Within the Zionist movement, the notion of a distinct Jewish ethic or a national morality grew directly out of Ha-am's writing.⁵

The idea that the state, rather than individual citizens, has a special moral obligation to engage or avoid certain activities is premised on the assumption that the state itself is distinct from other states. To that end, commentators ask "How could a Jew do that?" where "that" is "heartless and sadistic" treatment of Arab Palestinians.⁶ Theorists discuss the possibility of Israel conducting a "Jewish war."⁷ Both questions assume that there is something distinct about a Jewish state that would preclude certain actions, actions that a non-Jewish state might feel freer to undertake. For example, Deuteronomy 20:19 specifically prohibits cutting down the fruit trees of an enemy during the prosecution of war. Notable Hebrew and Biblical scholar Robert Alter explained that there are two justifications for this prohibition. First, destroying the trees "is a despoliation of God's natural gifts," and is thus an affront to God. The second justification is

much more practical, namely that the enemy is dependent on those trees for sustenance and trade, so to destroy the trees would punish the enemy long after the war was over. Destroying fruit trees was often done out of spite for an enemy, similar to a scorched earth strategy or the legendary strategy of salting the earth.⁸ Despite such a naked prohibition, Jewish settlers have uprooted and burned Palestinian olive trees while Israeli Defense Forces soldiers looked on without intervening. The IDF has itself cut down Palestinian olive trees as well under the premise that it was necessary to expose Palestinian shooters.⁹ For critics of Israeli conduct toward the Palestinian Arabs, the question is “if we stop acting Jewish, are we still Jews?”¹⁰ Israel is not a theocracy, so it cannot be religion alone that determines its Jewish character. The definition of Israel as a Jewish state is premised on the assumption that there is something uniquely Jewish about it, an assumption that arises in large part from Ha-am’s arguments in favor of a national morality.

Ha-am’s influence is also evident among those who support Israel. For example, the Birthright organization sponsors trips to Israel for young Jews from around the world. The trips are intended to “strengthen participants’ Jewish identity; to build an understanding, friendship and lasting bond with the land and people of Israel; and to reinforce the solidarity of the Jewish people worldwide”¹¹ Notably absent is any mention of a specifically religious identity or of religious observance. Also missing is any reference to anti-semitism or physical threats to Jews around the world. The clear implication of Birthright’s mission is worldwide support for Israel by Jews who feel connected to the state through their Jewish identity, whatever form that identity might take. That is not to imply that Ha-am would necessarily favor Birthright’s approach to building the sense of Jewish nationhood, but the position Birthright takes is clearly an extension of the ideology Ha-am advocated so forcefully.

Before Birthright, Ha-am's influence could also be seen in the writings of Martin Buber on the idea of a Jewish Renaissance. Ha-am made reference to a "resurrection of the hearts" in *Lo Zeh Haderekh*, which prefigured Buber's recognition of national and cultural renewal in his essay *Jewish Renaissance*. Like Ha-am, Buber did not find fault with the Diaspora per se, but with the lack of a collective center for Jewish culture to be expressed freely. The practical concerns that Ha-am expressed early in his career became ideological concerns for the Jewish Renaissance school in Buber's thinking.¹² As the Jewish state began to take shape, education was the primary means to establish and support a nationalist fervor.¹³ The focus on education for national identity extends directly to the present policies of the Israeli government. The Ministry of Education recently revised the curricular goals for the current school year to "reinforce Jewish and Zionist values."¹⁴ In short, the cultural identity that Ha-am sought is readily promoted by both governmental and non-governmental organizations in Israel and the diaspora. The role of cultural identity in Israeli and Zionist thinking points to the need for continued research into the relationships between Zionism, Israel, the Jewish world outside of Israel, and the rhetoric that creates those relationships.

Future Research

As this study demonstrates, there are sources of Zionist rhetoric that have not yet been systematically addressed by scholars because those sources operated outside of mainstream Zionism. Those alternative conceptions of what Zionism meant and should have meant are areas ripe for further investigation. One example is the territorialist rhetoric of Israel Zangwill. Zangwill worked alongside Herzl until the former's death in 1904, at which point Zangwill became the foremost advocate of a Jewish state wherever one could be established rather than specifically in Palestine. Whereas Ha-am differed from Herzl over the priority of Zionism's

goals, Zangwill differed from the World Zionist Organization on the best way to achieve the objective of a safe haven for persecuted Jews. The conception of a Jewish state outside of Palestine was anathema to the Russian delegation to the World Zionist Congress and Ha-am used the fact that Herzl entertained the idea in 1903 as further proof of Herzl's unfitness for leadership of the movement.¹⁵ Even though it was a politically untenable position, Zangwill's call for an immediate state rather than an ideal state was the natural conclusion that followed from justifying such a state based on the threat of antisemitism. If persecution was an immediate threat, and there is no doubt that it was in 1903, then it was certainly imperative that immediate action be taken to relieve that threat. The timeframe for establishing a Jewish state outside Palestine was much shorter than the alternative, which raises the question of why Zangwill's argument was ineffective.

Non-Jewish Zionist rhetoric, particularly recent rhetoric, also provides a rich source of resource material. Of course, Jews are not, nor have they ever been, the sole supporters of Zionism. Ha-am's thought about a Jewish state made that state intrinsically and thoroughly Jewish, to the point that the state itself would interact with the rest of the world almost exclusively through cultural exports, becoming almost xenophobic in its foreign relations. On the other hand, the Zionist pursuit of non-Jewish supporters, particularly in England, was certainly a practical matter, but also one that changed the nature of thinking about the state. Jewish Zionists and the Christians whose influence they sought could find common ground in their shared scriptural origins. The Jewish appeal to powerful people in England and elsewhere was thus a religious one, directly influencing the rhetoric surrounding Zionism and the Jewish state. While many religious Jews were opposed to a Jewish state, especially prior to the creation of Israel, the religious basis of the Zionist appeal to Christians justified a totally different approach to leading

to the relatively recent phenomenon of Christian Zionism among evangelical Christians. While Zionism in Jewish circles was either based on nationalist identity or the threat of antisemitism, in religiously motivated Christian circles, Zionism has been driven by the centrality of Israel to the prophecy of the endtimes. While mainstream Zionism assumed an inherent value to Judaism, or at least to the lives of people who happened to be Jewish, Christian Zionism values Jews because of their instrumental role in fulfilling apocalyptic prophecies. The influence that Christian Zionism has had over recent American policy toward Israel, as well as the prevalence of the ideology among American evangelicals would again indicate the potential for rhetorical investigation.¹⁶

Of course, territorialism and Christian Zionism are but significant examples of unexplored rhetorical artifacts. In the 115 years of organized Zionist activity, countless men and women have appealed to conscience and pragmatism to found, direct, redirect, organize, criticize, thank, praise, laud, glorify, extol, honor, bless, exalt, and acclaim the dream and reality of a Jewish state. That their efforts have been swept into the broader distinctions of Zionist thought and action does not diminish their contributions. Further research into their ideological work may help round out the history of Zionism and contribute to finding a way forward for the state of Israel.

Conclusion

Ahad Ha-am was, in his time, a major Zionist rhetor. His public work influenced the ultimate direction of Zionism despite Ha-am's avoidance of traditional leadership roles. Precisely because of his nontraditional role within the movement, historical and biographical studies have been unable to capture what made Ha-am such an important figure. The birth of cultural Zionism was a fundamentally rhetorical act, one that not only influenced the Zionist movement, but

prefigured questions and concerns of the Jewish state decades in advance. Ha-am's vision for a Jewish national identity was unique in its time, and however impractical it may have been as a political program, it was an important step in the recognition of Jews as a nation. That recognition was a necessary precondition in creating the political will to found a Jewish state, but it was also a galvanizing move for the Jewish community. The idea of a Jewish identity that transcended political and religious boundaries unified oppressed and endangered Jews in Russia with comfortable and enlightened Jews in the West. Ha-am was among the first to not only argue that such an identity existed, but also to place it at the center of his public advocacy. The ramifications of cultural Zionism are still being felt to this day, in Israel, in the United States, and in Jewish communities around the world.

Notes

Notes to Chapter One

¹ For example, see Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), ch. 4; David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1980), ch. 7.

² Laurence J. Silberstein, "Judaism as a Secular System of Meaning: The Writings of Ahad Ha'am," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 52, no. 3 (1984).

³ Matti Bunzl, "The Poetics of Politics and the Politics of Poetics: Richard Beer-Hofmann and Theodor Herzl Reconsidered," *The German Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (1996).

⁴ Steven J. Zipperstein, "Between Tribalism and Utopia: Ahad Ha'am and the Making of Jewish Cultural Politics," *Modern Judaism* 13, no. 3 (1993).

⁵ Carlo Strenger, "Ya'alon's style of nationalism is driving Israel further into the bunker," *Haaretz*, June 24 2010.

⁶ Marjorie Ingall, "Return to Never Never Land," *Tablet*, June 1 2010.

⁷ Carlo Strenger, "Angry Liberal Zionism can inspire a new generation of Israelis,"

<http://www.haaretz.com/blogs/strenger-than-fiction/angry-liberal-zionism-can-inspire-a-new-generation-of-israelis-1.293046>.

⁸ Micha Goodman, "Eretz Aaheret: The Ability to Change - Hillel the Elder meets Ahad Ha'am," *Eretz Acheret*, August 27 2009.

⁹ Carlo Strenger, "Knowledge-Nation Israel: A New Unifying Vision," *Azure* 39, no. Winter (2010): 36.

¹⁰ Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

¹¹ Steven J. Zipperstein, "Ahad Ha-'Am's politics," *Jewish History* 4, no. 2 (1990).

¹² ———, "Between Tribalism and Utopia: Ahad Ha'am and the Making of Jewish Cultural Politics," 231.

¹³ Hans Kohn, ed. *Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic: Basic Writings of Ahad Ha'am* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), 7.

¹⁴ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949).

¹⁵ Howard M Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, 2 ed. (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1996), 57-58.

¹⁶ David Vital, "The Zionist as Thinker: Ahad Ha-am and Hibbat Zion," in *At the Crossroads: Essays on Ahad Ha-am*, ed. Jacques Kornberg (Albany: State University of New York, 1983), 89.

¹⁷ Leon Simon, *Ahad Ha-am, Asher Ginzberg: A Biography* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1960); Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann*.

¹⁸ Steven J. Zipperstein, "On Reading Ahad Ha'am as Mordecai Kaplan Read Him," *Jewish Social Studies* 12, no. 2 (2006).

¹⁹ ———, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1993); Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*.

²⁰ Kohn, *Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic: Basic Writings of Ahad Ha'am*.

²¹ Zipperstein, "Ahad Ha-'Am's politics."

²² Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), 59.

²³ Michael Selzer, ed. *Zionism Reconsidered: The Rejection of Jewish Normalcy* (London: The MacMillan Company, 1970).

²⁴ Michael Wex, *Born to Kvetch: Yiddish Language and Culture in All of Its Moods* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

²⁵ Walter I. Ackerman, "Some Uses of Justification in Jewish Education," *AJS Review* 2(1977); Kohn, *Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic: Basic Writings of Ahad Ha'am*.

²⁶ Eli'ezer Don-Yihya, "Zionism in Retrospective," *Modern Judaism* 18, no. 3 (1998); Mick Davis, "Defending Israel in the diaspora," *The Jewish Chronicle*, June 17 2010; Eric Herschthal, "Clash Of Zionisms In Academia " *The Jewish Week*, June 23 2010.

²⁷ Simon, *Ahad Ha-am, Asher Ginzberg: A Biography*.

²⁸ Amos Kiewe, "Theodore Herzl's The Jewish State: Prophetic Rhetoric in the Service of Political Objectives," *Journal of Communication & Religion* 26, no. 2 (2003).

²⁹ Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism*.

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- ³¹ Howard M Sachar, "The Rise of Zionism," in *The Zionist Movement in Palestine and World Politics, 1880-1918*, ed. N. Gordon Jr. Levin (Lexington, MA: DC Heath & Co, 1974), 4-10, 18; Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*: 40-83.
- ³² Kohn, *Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic: Basic Writings of Ahad Ha'am*.
- ³³ David H Weinberg, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Haim Zhitlowski, Simon Dubnow, Ahad Ha-am, and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identity* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996).
- ³⁴ Kohn, *Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic: Basic Writings of Ahad Ha'am*.
- ³⁵ Don-Yihya, "Zionism in Retrospective."
- ³⁶ Kohn, *Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic: Basic Writings of Ahad Ha'am*.
- ³⁷ Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text*, no. 19/20 (1988).
- ³⁸ Peter Beinart, "The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment," *The New York Review of Books*, June 10 2010.
- ³⁹ Nathan Guttman, "Embattled New Israel Fund Fights Back," *The Forward*, February 3 2010.
- ⁴⁰ Davis, "Defending Israel in the diaspora."
- ⁴¹ Jakob J Petuchowski, *Zion Reconsidered* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1966).
- ⁴² Noam Pianko, *Zionism: The Roads Not Taken* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 2010).
- ⁴³ Herschthal, "Clash Of Zionisms In Academia ".
- ⁴⁴ Arthur Hertzberg, *The Fate of Zionism: A Secular Future of Israel & Palestine* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003), 1-2.
- ⁴⁵ Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*: 40.
- ⁴⁶ Dan A. Porat, "The Nation Revised: Teaching the Jewish Past in the Zionist Present (1890–1913)," *Jewish Social Studies* 13, no. 1 (2006).

⁴⁷ Bunzl, "The Poetics of Politics and the Politics of Poetics: Richard Beer-Hofmann and Theodor Herzl Reconsidered."

⁴⁸ Shai Ginsburg, "Politics and Letters: On the Rhetoric of the Nation in Pinsker and Ahad Ha-Am," *Prooftexts* 29, no. 2 (2009): 173. see, for example Alan Mintz, "Ahad Ha-am and the Essay: The Vicissitudes of Reason," in *At the Crossroads: Essays on Ahad Ha-am*, ed. Jacques Kornberg (Albany: State University of New York, 1983). and Arnold J Band, "The Ahad Ha-am and Berdyczewski Polarity," in *At the Crossroads: Essays on Ahad Ha-am*, ed. Jacques Kornberg (Albany: State University of New York, 1983).

⁴⁹ Weinberg, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Haim Zhitlowski, Simon Dubnow, Ahad Ha-am, and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identity*: 224.

⁵⁰ Jacques Kornberg, ed. *At the Crossroads: Essays on Ahad Ha-am* (Albany: State University of New York, 1983), see Parfitt (ch. 2), Attia, (ch. 3), Seltzer (ch. 6), Nash (ch. 7), Vital (ch. 8), Salmon (ch. 9), Kornberg (ch. 10), Friesel (ch. 11), Reinhartz (ch. 12), and Halpern (ch. 13).

⁵¹ Band, "The Ahad Ha-am and Berdyczewski Polarity."; Mintz, "Ahad Ha-am and the Essay: The Vicissitudes of Reason."

⁵² Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism*: xxiv.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁵⁴ Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*.

⁵⁵ Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*.

⁵⁶ Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*: 9.

⁵⁷ Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*: 6-39.

⁵⁸ Vital, *The Origins of Zionism*: 29.

⁵⁹ Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*.

⁶⁰ Vital, *The Origins of Zionism*: 40-41.

⁶¹ Silberstein, "Judaism as a Secular System of Meaning: The Writings of Ahad Haam."

⁶² V.D. Segre, "From Enlightenment to Socialism," in *The Zionist Movement in Palestine and World Politics, 1880-1914*, ed. N. Gordon Jr. Levin (Lexington, MA: DC Heath & Co, 1974).

⁶³ Vital, *The Origins of Zionism*: 52-54.

⁶⁴ Bernard Johnpoll, K, "Why They Left: Russian-Jewish Mass Migration and Repressive Laws, 1881-1917," *American Jewish Archives* 47, no. 1 (1995).

⁶⁵ Vital, *The Origins of Zionism*: 202-08.

⁶⁶ Petuchowski, *Zion Reconsidered*.

⁶⁷ Bunzl, "The Poetics of Politics and the Politics of Poetics: Richard Beer-Hofmann and Theodor Herzl Reconsidered."

⁶⁸ Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Cultural Zionism's Image of the Educated Jew: Reflections on Creating a Secular Jewish Culture," *Modern Judaism* 18, no. 3 (1998): 228.

⁶⁹ Kohn, *Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic: Basic Writings of Ahad Ha'am*, 17.

⁷⁰ Bunzl, "The Poetics of Politics and the Politics of Poetics: Richard Beer-Hofmann and Theodor Herzl Reconsidered."

⁷¹ Mendes-Flohr, "Cultural Zionism's Image of the Educated Jew: Reflections on Creating a Secular Jewish Culture," 236.

⁷² Yosef Gorny, "The 'Melting Pot' in Zionist Thought," *Israel Studies* 6, no. 3 (2001).

⁷³ Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims."

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